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THE VALE OF TEMPE

POEMS

BY

MADISON J. CAWEIN

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET
1905

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BY
MADISON J. CAWEIN

Published, September, 1905

I wish to thank Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Harper & Brothers, The Century Co., Ess Ess Publishing Co., The Metropolitan Magazine Co., J. B. Lippincott Co., and the Bobbs Merrill Co., for permission to reprint a number of the poems included in the present volume.

TO GERTRUDE

You are weary of reading:
I am weary of song:
The one is misleading;
The other, o'er long:—
All Art 's over long.

Ah, would it were ours
To leave them, and then,
'Mid the fields and the flowers,
Be children again,
Just children again.

THE VALE OF TEMPE

THE VALE OF TEMPE

THE HYLAS

I

I HEARD the hylas in the bottomlands
Piping a reed-note in the praise of Spring:
The South-wind brought the music on its wing,
As 't were a hundred strands
Of guttural gold smitten of elfin hands;
Or of sonorous silver, struck by bands,
Anviled within the earth,
Of laboring gnomes shaping some gem of worth.
Sounds that seemed to bid
The wildflowers wake;

Unclose each dewy lid,
And starrily shake
Sleep from their airy eyes
Beneath the loam,
And, robed in dædal dyes,
Frail as the fluttering foam,
In countless myriads rise.
And in my city home
I, too, who heard
Their reedy word,
Awoke, and, with my soul, went forth to roam.

II

And under glimpses of the cloud-white sky
My soul and I
Beheld her seated, Spring among the woods
With bright attendants,
Two radiant maidens,
The Wind and Sun: one robed in cadence,
And one in white resplendence,

Working wild wonders with the solitudes.
And thus it was,
So it seemed to me,
Where she sat apart
Fondling a bee,
By some strange art,
As in a glass,
Down in her heart
My eyes could see
What would come to pass:—
How in each tree,
Each blade of grass,—
Dead though it seemed,—
Still lived and dreamed
Life and perfume,
Color and bloom,
Housed from the North
Like golden mirth,
That she with jubilation would bring forth,
Astonishing Earth.

III

And thus it was I knew
That though the trees were barren of all buds,
And all the woods
Of blossoms now, still, still their hoods
And heads of blue and gold,
And pink and pearl lay hidden in the mould;
And in a day or two,
When Spring's fair feet came twinkling through
The trees, their gold and blue,
And pearl and pink in countless bands would rise,
Invading all these ways
With loveliness; and to the skies,
In radiant rapture raise
The fragile sweetness of a thousand eyes.
When every foot of soil would boast
An ambuscade
Of blossoms; each green rood parade
Its flowery host;

And every acre of the woods,
With little bird-like beaks of leaves and buds,
Brag of its beauty; making bankrupts of
Our hearts of praise, and beggar us of love.

IV

Here, when the snow was flying,
And barren boughs were sighing,
In icy January,
I stood, like some gray tree, lonely and solitary.
Now every spine and splinter
Of wood, washed clean of winter,
By hill and canyon
Makes of itself an intimate companion,
A confidant, who whispers me the dreams
That haunt its heart, and clothe it as with gleams.
And lonely now no more
I walk the mossy floor
Of woodlands where each bourgeoning leaf is matched,

Mated with music; triumphed o'er
Of building love and nestling song just hatched.

V

Washed of the early rains,
And rosed with ruddy stains,
The boughs and branches now make ready for
Their raiment green of leaves and musk and myrrh.—
As if to greet her pomp,
The heralds of her state,
As 't were with many a silvery trump,
The birds are singing, singing,
And all the world 's elate,
As o'er the hills, as 't were from Heaven's gate,
With garments, dewy-clinging,
Comes Spring, around whose way the budded woods are ringing
With redbird and with bluebird and with thrush;
While, overhead, on happy wings is swinging

The swallow through the heaven's azure hush:
And wren and sparrow, vireo and crow
Are busy with their nests, or high or low,
In every tree, it seems, and every bush.
The loamy odor of the turfy heat,
Breathed warm from every field and wood-retreat,
Is as if spirits passed on flowery feet:—
That indescribable
Aroma of the woods one knows so well,
Reminding one of sylvan presences,
Clad on with lichen and with moss,
That haunt and trail across
The woods' dim dales and dells; their airy essences
Of racy nard and musk
Rapping at gummy husk
And honeyed sheath of every leaf and flower,
That open to their knock, each at the appointed hour:—

And, lo!
Where'er they go,
Behold a miracle
Too beautiful to tell!—
Where late the woods were bare
The red-bud shakes its hair
Of flowering flame; the dogwood and the haw
Dazzle with pearl the shaw;
And the broad maple crimsons, sunset-red,
Through firmaments of forest overhead:
And of its boughs the wild-crab makes a lair,
A rosy cloud of blossoms, for the bees,
Bewildered there,
To revel in; lulling itself with these.
And in the whispering woods
The wildflower multitudes
Rise, star, and bell, and bugle, all amort
To everything save their own loveliness
And the soft wind's caress,—
The wind that tip-toes through them:—liverwort,

Spring-beauty, windflower and the bleedingheart,
And bloodroot, holding low
Its cups of stainless snow;
Sorrel and trillium and the twin-leaf, too,
Twinkling, like stars, through dew:
And patches, as it were, of saffron skies,
Ranunculus; and golden eyes
Of adder's-tongue; and mines,
It seems, of grottoed gold, the poppy-celandines;
And, sapphire-spilled,
Bluets and violets,
Dark pansy-violets and columbines,
With rainy radiance filled;
And many more whose names my mind forgets,
But not my heart:
The Nations of the Flowers, making gay
In every place and part,
With pomp and pageantry
Of absolute Beauty, all the worlds of woods,
In congregated multitudes,

Assembled where
Unearthly colors all the oaks put on,
Velvet and silk and vair,
Vermeil and mauve and fawn,
Dim and auroral as the hues of dawn.

WIND AND CLOUD

A March Voluntary

I

Winds that cavern heaven and the clouds
And canyon with cerulean blue,—
Great rifts down which the stormy sunlight crowds
Like some bright seraph, who,
Mailed in intensity of silver mail,
Flashes his splendor over hill and vale,—
Now tramp, tremendous, the loud forest through:
Or now, like mighty runners in a race,
That swing, long pace to pace,
Sweep 'round the hills, fresh as, at dawn's first start,

They swept, dew-dripping, from
The crystal-crimson ruby of her heart,
Shouting the dim world dumb.
And with their passage the gray and green
Of the earth 's washed clean;
And the cleansing breath of their might is wings
And warm aroma we know as Spring's,
And sap and strength to her bourgeonings.

II

My brow I bare
To the cool, clean air,
That blows from the crests of the clouds that roll,
Pearl-piled and berged as floes of Northern Seas,
Banked gray and thunder-low
Big in the heaven's peace;
Clouds, borne from nowhere that we know,
With nowhere for their goal;
With here and there a silvery glow

Of sunlight chasming deeps of sombre snow,
Great gulfs that overflow
With sky, a sapphire-blue,
Or opal, sapphire-kissed,
Wide-welled and deep and swiftly rifting through
Stratas of streaming mist;—
Each opening like a pool,
Serene, cerule,
Set 'round with crag-like clouds 'mid which its
eye gleams cool.

III

What blue is bluer than the bluebird's blue!—
'T is as if heaven itself sat on its wings;
As if the sky in miniature it bore
The fields and forests through,
Bringing the very heaven to our door;
The daybreak of its back soft-wedded to
The sunset-auburn of its throat that sings.—
The dithyrambics of the wind and rain

Strive to, but cannot, drown its strain:
Again, and yet again
I hear it where the maples tassel red,
And blossoms of the crab round out o'erhead,
And catkins make the willow-brake
A gossamer blur around the lake
That lately was a stream,
A little stream locked in its icy dream.

IV

Invisible crystals of aërial ring,
Against the wind I hear the bluebird fling
Its notes; and where the oak's mauve leaves uncurl
I catch the skyey glitter of its wing;
Its wing that lures me, like some magic charm,
Far in the woods
And shadowy solitudes:
And where the purple hills stretch under purple and pearl

Of clouds that sweep and swirl,
Its music seems to take material form;
A form that beckons with cerulean arm
And bids me see and follow,
Where, in the violet hollow,
There at the wood's far turn,
On starry moss and fern,
She shimmers, glimmering like a rainbowed shower,
The Spirit of Spring,
Diaphanous-limbed, who stands
With honeysuckle hands
Sowing the earth with many a firstling flower,
Footed with fragrance of their blossoming,
And clad in heaven as is the bluebird's wing.

V

The tumult and the booming of the trees,
Shaken with shoutings of the winds of March—
No mightier music have I heard than these,—

The rocking and the rushing of the trees,
The organ-thunder of the forest's arch.
And in the wind their columned trunks become,
  Each one, a mighty pendulum,
    Swayed to and fro as if in time
To some vast song, some roaring rhyme,
Wind-shouted from sonorous hill to hill.
    The woods are never still:
    The dead leaves frenzy by,
Innumerable and frantic as the dance
That whirled its madness once beneath the sky
In ancient Greece,—like withered Corybants:
And I am caught and carried with their rush,
  Their countless panic—borne away,
A brother to the wind, through the deep gray
Of the old beech-wood, where the wild March-
      day
Sits dreaming, filling all the boisterous hush
With murmurous laughter and swift smiles of
      sun;

Conspiring in its heart and plotting how
To load with leaves and blossoms every bough,
And whispering to itself, "Now Spring 's begun!
And soon her flowers shall golden through these
leaves!—
Away, ye sightless things and sere!
Make room for that which shall appear!
The glory and the gladness of the year;
The loveliness my eye alone perceives,—
Still hidden there beneath the covering leaves,—
My song shall waken!—flowers, that this floor
Of whispering woodland soon shall carpet o'er
For my sweet sisters' feet to tread upon,
Months kinder than myself, the stern and strong,
Tempestuous-loving one,
Whose soul is full of wild, tumultuous song;
And whose rough hand now thrusts itself among
The dead leaves; groping for the flowers that lie
Huddled beneath, each like a sleep-closed eye:
Gold adder's-tongue and pink

Oxalis; snow-pale bloodroot blooms;
May-apple hoods, that parasol the brink,
Screening their moons, of the slim woodland-
stream:
And the wild iris; trillium,—white as stars,—
And bluebells, dream on dream:
With harsh hand groping in the glooms,
I grasp their slenderness and shake
Their lovely eyes awake,
Dispelling from their souls the sleep that mars;
With heart-disturbing jars
Clasping their forms, and with rude finger-tips,
Through the dark rain that drips
Lifting them shrinking to my stormy lips.

VI

"Already spicewood and the sassafras,
Like fragrant flames, begin
To tuft their boughs with topaz, ere they spin
Their beryl canopies—a glimmering mass,

Mist-blurred, above the deepening grass.
Already where the old beech stands
Clutching the lean soil as it were with hands
Taloned and twisted,—on its trunk a knot,
A huge excrescence, a great fungous clot,
Like some enormous and distorting wart,—
My eyes can see how, blot on beautiful blot
Of blue, the violets blur through
The musky and the loamy rot
Of leaf-pierced leaves; and, heaven in their hue,
A sunbeam at each blossom's heart,
The little bluets, crew on azure crew,
Prepare their myriads for invasion too.

VII

"And in my soul I see how, soon, shall rise,—
Still hidden to men's eyes,—
Dim as the wind that 'round them treads,—
Hosts of spring-beauties, streaked with rosy reds,
And pale anemones, whose airy heads,

As to some fairy rhyme,
All day shall nod in delicate time:
And now, even now, white peal on peal
Of pearly bells,—that in bare boughs conceal
Themselves, — like snowy music, chime on chime,
The huckleberries to my gaze reveal—
Clusters, that soon shall toss
Above this green-starred moss,
That, like an emerald fire, gleams across
This forest-side, and from its moist deeps lifts
Slim, wire-like stems of seed;
Or, lichen-colored, glows with many a bead
Of cup-like blossoms: carpets where, I read,
When through the night's dark rifts
The moonlight's glimpsing splendor sifts,
The immaterial forms
With moonbeam-beckoning arms,
Of Fable and Romance,—
Myths that are born of whispers of the wind

And foam of falling waters, music-twinned,—
Shall lead the legendary dance;
The dance that never stops,
Of Earth's wild beauty on the green hill-tops."

VIII

The youth, the beauty and disdain
Of birth, death does not know,
Compel my heart with longing like to pain
When the spring breezes blow.
The fragrance and the heat
Of their soft breath, whose musk makes sweet
Each woodland way, each wild retreat,
Seem saying in my ear, "Hark, and behold!
Before a week be gone
This barren woodside and this leafless wold
A million flowers shall invade
With argent and azure, pearl and gold,—
Like rainbow fragments scattered of the dawn,—
Here making bright, here wan

Each foot of earth, each glen and glimmering
glade,
Each rood of windy wood,
Where late gaunt Winter stood,
Shaggy with snow and howling at the sky;
Where even now the Springtime seems afraid
To whisper of the beauty she designs,
The flowery campaign that she now outlines
Within her soul; her heart's conspiracy
To take the world with loveliness; defy
And then o'erwhelm the Death—that Winter
throned
Amid the trees,—with love that she hath owned
Since God informed her of His very breath,
Giving her right triumphant over Death.
And, irresistible,
Her heart's deep ecstasy shall swell,
Taking the form of flower, leaf, and blade,
Invading every dell,
And sweeping, surge on surge,

Around the world, like some exultant raid,
Even to the heaven's verge.
Soon shall her legions storm
Death's ramparts, planting Life's fair standard
there,
The banner which her beauty hath in care,
Beauty, that shall eventuate
With all the pomp and pageant and the state,
That are a part of power, and that wait
On majesty, to which it, too, is heir."

IX

Already purplish pink and green
The bloodroot's buds and leaves are seen
Clumped in dim cirques; one from the other
Hardly distinguished in the shadowy smother
Of last year's leaves blown brown between.
And, piercing through the layers of dead leaves,
The searching eye perceives
The dog's-tooth violet, pointed needle-keen,

Lifting its beak of mottled green;
While near it heaves
The May-apple its umbrous spike, a ball,—
Like to a round, green bean,
That folds its blossom,—topping its tight-closed parasol:
The clustered bluebell near
Hollows its azure ear,
Low-leaning to the earth as if to hear
The sound of its own growing and perfume
Flowing into its bloom:
And softly there
The twin-leaf's stems prepare
Pale tapers of transparent white,
As if to light
The Spirit of Beauty through the wood's green night.

X

Why does Nature love the number five?
Five-whorled leaves and five-tipped flowers?—

Haply the bee that sucks i' the rose,
Laboring aye to store its hive,
And humming away the long noon hours,
Haply it knows as it comes and goes:
Or haply the butterfly,
Or moth of pansy-dye,
Flitting from bloom to bloom
In the forest's violet gloom,
  It knows why:
Or the irised fly, to whom
Each bud, as it glitters near,
Lends eager and ardent ear.—
  And also tell
Why Nature loves so well
To prank her flowers in gold and blue.
  Haply the dew,
That lies so close to them the whole night through,
  Hugged to each honeyed heart,
Perhaps the dew the secret could impart:

Or haply now the bluebird there that bears,
  Glad, unawares,
God's sapphire on its wings,
  The lapis-lazuli
  O' the clean, clear sky,
The heav'n of which he sings,
Haply he, too, could tell me why:
Or the maple there that swings,
  To the wind's soft sigh,
  Its winglets, crystal red,
A rainy ruby twinkling overhead:
Or haply now the wind, that breathes of rain
Amid the rosy boughs, it could explain:
And even now, in words of mystery,—
That haunt the heart of me,—
Low-whispered, dim and bland,
Tells me, but tells in vain,
And strives to make me see and understand,
Delaying where
The feldspar fire of the violet breaks,

And the starred myrtle aches
With heavenly blue; and the frail windflower
shakes
Its trembling tresses in the opal air.

IN SOLITARY PLACES

I

The hurl and hurry of the winds of March,
That tore the ash and bowed the pine and larch,
Are past and done with:—winds, that trampled through
The forests with enormous, scythe-like sweep,
And from the darkening deep,
The battlements of heaven, thunder-blue,
Rumbled the arch,
The rocking arch of all the booming oaks,
With stormy chariot-spokes;
Chariots from which wild bugle-blasts they blew,
Their warrior challenge. . . . Now the wind-flower sweet
Misses the fury of their ruining feet,

The trumpet-thunder of resistless flight,
Crashing and vast, obliterating light;
Sweeping the skeleton cohorts down
Of last year's leaves; and, overhead,
Hurrying the giant foliage of night,
Gaunt clouds that streamed with tempest.—Now
each crown
Of woods that stooped to clamor of their tread,
The frenzy of their passage, stoops no more,
Hearing no more their clarion-command,
Their chariot-hurl and the wild whip in hand.
No more, no more,
The forests rock and roar
And tumult with their shoutings. . . . Hushed
and still
Is the green-gleaming and the sunlit hill,
Along whose sides,
Flushing the dewy moss and rainy grass—
Beneath the topaz-tinted sassafras,
As aromatic as some orient wine—

The violet fire of the bluet glides,
The amaranthine flame
Glints of the bluebell; and the celandine,
Line upon lovely line,
Deliberate goldens into birth;
And, ruby and rose, the moccasin-flower hides:
Innumerable blooms, with which she writes her name,
April, upon the page,
The winter-withered parchment of old Earth,
Her fragrant autograph that gives it worth
And loveliness that takes away its age.

II

Here where the woods are wet,
The blossoms of the dog's-tooth violet
Seem meteors in a miniature firmament
Of wildflowers, where, with rainy sound and scent
Of breeze and blossom, soft the April went:

Their tongue-like leaves of umber-mottled green,
So thickly seen,
Seem dropping words of gold,
The visible syllables of a magic old.
Beside them, near the wahoo-bush and haw,
Blooms the hepatica;
Its slender flowers upon swaying stems
Lifting pale, solitary blooms,
Starry, and twilight-colored,—like frail gems,
That star the diadems
Of sylvan spirits, piercing pale the glooms;—
Or like the wands, the torches of the fays,
That light lone, woodland ways
With slim, uncertain rays:—
(The faery people, whom no eye may see,
Busy, so legend says,
With budding bough and leafing tree,
The blossom's heart o' honey and honey-sack
o' the bee,
And all dim thoughts and dreams,

That take the form of flowers, as it seems,
And haunt the banks of greenwood streams,
Showing in every line and curve,
Commensurate with our love, and intimacy,
A smiling confidence or sweet reserve.)

There at that leafy turn
Of trailered rocks, rise fronds of hart's-tongue fern:
Fronds that my fancy names
Uncoiling flames
Of feathering emerald and gold,
That, kindled in the musky mould,
Now, stealthily as the morn, unfold
Their cool green fires that burn
Uneagerly, and spread around
An elfin light above the ground,
Like that green glow
A spirit, lamped with crystal, makes below
In dripping caves of labyrinthine moss.

And in the underwoods, around them, toss
The white-hearts with their penciled leaves,
That 'mid the shifting gleams and glooms,
The interchanging shine and shade,
Seem some vague garment made
By unseen hands that weave, that none perceives;
Pale hands that work invisible looms,
Now dropping shreds of light,
Now shadow-shreds, that interbraid
And form faint colors mixed with frail perfumes.
Or, are they fragments left in flight,
These flowers that scatter every glade
With windy, beckoning white,
And breezy blowing blue,
Of her wild gown that shone upon my sight,
A moment, in the woods I wandered through?
April's, whom still I follow,
Whom still my dreams pursue;
Who leads me on by many a tangled clue
Of loveliness, until, in some green hollow,

Born of her fragrance and her melody,
But lovelier than herself and happier, too,
Cradled in blossoms of the dogwood-tree,
My soul shall see—
White as a sunbeam in the heart of day—
The infant, May.

III

Up, up, my Heart, and forth, where none perceives!
'T was this that that sweet lay meant
You heard in dreams.—
Come, let us take rich payment,
For every care that grieves,
From Nature's prodigal purse. 'T was this that May meant
By sending forth that wind which 'round our eaves
Whispered all night.—Or was 't the Spirit who weaves,

From gold and glaucous green of early leaves,
Spring's radiant raiment?—
Up, up, my Heart, and forth, where none perceives!

Come, let us forth, my Heart, where none divines!
Into far woodland places,
Where we may meet the fair, assembled races,
Beneath the guardian pines,
Of God's first flowers:—poppy-celandines,
And wake-robins and bugled columbines,
With which her hair, her heavenly hair she twines,
And loops and laces.—
Come let us forth, my Heart, where none divines!

Forth, forth, my Heart, and let us find our dreams,
There where they haunt each hollow!

Dreams, luring us with Oread feet to follow,
With flying feet of beams,
Fleeter and lighter than the soaring swallow:
Dreams, holding us with Dryad glooms and gleams;
With Naiad looks, far stiller than still streams,
That have beheld and still reflect, it seems,
The God Apollo.—
Forth, forth, my Heart, and let us find our dreams!

Out, out my Heart! the world is white with spring.
Long have our dreams been pleaders:
Now let them be our firm but gentle leaders.
Come, let us forth and sing
Among the amber-emerald-tufted cedars,
And balm-o'-Gileads, cottonwoods,—a-swing
Like giant censers,—that from leaf-cusps fling
Balsams of gummy gold, bewildering

The winds their feeders.—
Out, out, my Heart! the world is white with spring.

Up, up, my Heart, and all thy hope put on!
Array thyself in splendor!
Like some bright dragonfly, some May-fly slender,
The irised lamels don
Of thy new armor; and, where burns the centre,
Refulgent, of the widening rose of dawn,
Spread thy wild wings! and, ere the hour be gone,
Bright as a blast from some bold clarion,
Thy Dream-world enter!—
Up, up, my heart, and all thy hope put on!

IV

And then I heard it singing,—
The wind that kissed my hair,—
A song of wild expression,

A song that called in session
The wildflowers there up-springing,
The wildflowers lightly flinging
Their tresses to the air.

And first the bloodroot-blooms of March
In troops arose; each with its torch
Of hollow snow, within which, bright,
The calyx grottoed golden light.

Hepatica and bluet,
And gold corydalis,
Rose, swaying to the aria;
While phlox and dim dentaria
In rapture, ere they knew it,
Oped, nodding lightly to it,
Faint as a first star is.

And then a music,—to the ear
Inaudible,—I seemed to hear;

A symphony that seemed to rise
And speak in colors to the eyes.

I saw the Jacob's-Ladder
Ring violet peal on peal
Of perfume, azure-swinging;
The bluebell slimly ringing
Its purple chimes; and gladder,
Green note on note, the madder
Bells of the Solomon's-seal.

Now far away; now near; now lost,
I saw their fragrant music tossed,
Mixed dimly with white interludes
Of trilliums starring cool the woods.

Then choral, solitary,
I saw the celandine
Smite bright its golden cymbals;
The starwort shake its timbrels;
The whiteheart's horns of Faery,

With many a flourish airy,
Strike silvery into line.

And straight my soul they seemed to draw,
By chords of loveliness and awe,
Into a Faery World afar,
Where all man's dreams and longings are.

V

Then the face of a spirit looked down at me
Out of the deeps of the opal morn:
Its eyes were blue as a sunlit sea,
And young with the joy of a star that has just been born:
And I seemed to hear, with my soul, the rose of its cool mouth say:—

" Long I lay; long I lay,
Low on the Hills of the Break-of-Day,
Where ever the light is green and gray,

And the gleam of the moon is a silvery spray,
And the stars are glimmering bubbles:
Now from the Hills of the Break-of-Day
I come, I come, on a rainbow ray,
To laugh and sparkle, to leap and play,
And blow from the face of the world away,
Like mists, its cares and troubles.''

VI

And now that the dawn is everywhere
Let us take this road through this wild green
place,
Where the rattlesnake-weed shows its yellow
face,
And the lichens cover the rocks with lace:
Where tannin-touched is the wild free air,
Let us take this path through the oaks where
thin
The low leaves whisper, '' The day is fair,''
And waters murmur, '' Come in, come in!

Where the wind of our foam can play with your hair
And blow away care."

Berry blossoms that seem to flow
As the winds blow;
Blackberry blossoms swing and sway
To and fro
Along our way,
Like ocean spray on a breezy day,
Over the green of the grass as foam on the green of a bay
When the world is white and green with the white and the green of May.

And here the bluets blooming
Make little eyes at you;
O'er which the bees go booming,
Drunk with the honey-dew.—
O slender Quaker-ladies,
O star-bright Quaker-ladies,

With eyes of heavenly blue,
With eyes of azure hue,—
Who, where the mossy shade is,
Hold quiet Quaker-meeting,—
Are these your serenaders?
Your gold-hipped serenaders,
Who, humming love-songs true,
And to your eyes repeating
Soft ballads, stop to woo?
Then change to ambuscaders,
To gold galloonéd raiders,
And rob the hearts of you,
The golden hearts of you.

And here the bells of the huckleberries toss, so it seems, in time,
Delicate, tenderly white, clumped by the wild-wood way,
Swinging, it seems, inaudible peals of a dew-clustered rhyme,

Visible music, dropped from the virginal lips of
the May,
Crystally dropped, so it seems, blossoming bar
upon bar,
Pendent, pensively pale, star upon hollowed star.

VII

The dewberries are blooming now;
The days are long, the nights are short:
Each dogwood and each black-haw bough
Is bleached with bloom, and seems a part,—
Reflected palely on her brow,—
Of dreams that haunt the Year's young heart.

But this will pass; and instantly
The world forget the spring that was;
And underneath the wild-plum tree,
'Mid hornet hum and wild-bee's buzz,
Summer, in dreamy reverie,
Will sit, all warm and amorous.

Summer, with drowsy eyes and hair,
Who walks the orchard aisles between;
Whose hot touch tans the freckled pear,
And crimsons peach and nectarine;
And in the vineyard everywhere
Bubbles with blue the grape's ripe green.

Where now the briers blossoming are
Soon will the berries darkly glow;
Then summer pass: and, star on star,
Where now the grass is strewn below
With blossoms, soon, both near and far,
Will lie th' obliterating snow.

The star-flower, now that discs with gold
The woodland moss, the forest grass,
Already in a day is old,
Already doth its beauty pass;
Soon, undistinguished, with the mould
'T will mingle and will mix, alas!

The bluet, too, that spreads its skies,
Diminutive heavens, at our feet;
And crowfoot-bloom, that, with orbed eyes
Of amber, now our eyes doth greet,
Shall fade and pass, and none surmise
How once they made the Maytime sweet.

VIII

But still the crowfoot trails its gold
Along the edges of the oak wood old;
And still, where spreads the water, white are seen
The lilies islanded between
The pads 'round archipelagoes of green;
The jade-dark pads that pave
The water's wrinkled wave,
In which the warbler and the sparrow lave
Their fluttered breasts and wings;
Preening their backs, with many twitterings,
With necks the moisture streaks;
Then dipping deep their beaks,

To which some bead of liquid coolness clings,
As bending back their mellow throats
They let the freshness trickle into notes.
And now you hear
The red-capped woodpecker rap close and clear;
And now that acrobat,
The yellow-breasted chat,
Chuckles his grotesque music from
Some tree that he hath clomb.
And now, and now,
Upon a locust bough,
Hark how the honey-throated thrush
Scatters the forest's emerald hush
With notes of golden harmony,
Taking the woods with witchery—
Or is 't some spirit none may see,
Hid in the top of yonder tree,
Who, in his house of leaves, of haunted green,
Keeps trying, silver-sweet, his sunbeam flute
serene?

IX

Again the spirit looked down at me
Out of the sunset's ruin of gold;
Its eyes were dark as a moonless sea,
And grave with the grief of a star that with sorrow is old:
And I seemed to hear, with my soul, the flame of its sad mouth sigh:—

"Now good-by! now good-by!
Down to the Caves of the Night go I:
Where a shadowy couch of the purple sky,
That the moon- and the starlight curtain high,
Is spread for my joy and sorrow:
Down to the Caves of the Night go I,
Where side by side in mystery
With all the Yesterdays I 'll lie;
And where, from my body, before I die,
Will be born the young To-morrow."

X

And now that the dusk draws down you see,
Tipped by the weight of a passing bee,
The milkwort's spike of blue,
Of lavender hue,
Nod like a goblin night-cap, slim, sedate,
That night shall tassel with the dew,
Beneath its canopy of flowering rue.
And now, as twilight's purple state
Deepens the oaks' dark vistas through,
The owlet's cry of "Who, oh, who,
Who walks so late?"
Drifts like a challenge down to you.

Or there on the twig of the oak-tree tall,
The gray-green egg in the gray-green gall,
You, too, might hear if you, too, would try,
Might hear it open; all tinily
Split, and the little round worm and white,
That grows to a gnat in a summer night,

Uncurl in its nest as it dreams of flight:
In the heart of the weed that grows near by,
The little gray worm that becomes a fly,
A green wood-fly, a rainbowed fly,
You, too, might hear if you, too, would try,
As a leaf-bud pushes from forth a tree,
Minute of movement, steadily,
As it feels a yearning for wings begin,
Under the milk of its larval skin
The silent pressure of wings within.

The west grows ashen, the woods grow beryl-
wan;
The redbird lifts its plaintive vesper-song,
Where faint a fox or rabbit steals along:
And in some vine-roofed hollow, far withdrawn,
The creek-frog sounds his deeply guttural gong,
As dusk comes on:—
The water's gnarléd dwarf or gnome,
Seated upon his temple's oozy dome,

Calling the faithful unto prayer,
Muezzin-like, the worshippers of the moon,
The insect-folk of earth and air
That join him in his twilight tune.—

Along the path where the lizard hides,
An instant shadow, the spider glides,
The hairy spider that haunts the way,
Crouching black by its earth-bored hole,
An insect-ogre, that lairs with the mole,
Hungry, seeking its insect prey,
Fast to follow and swift to slay.
And over your hands and over your face
The cobweb brushes its phantom lace:
And now from many a stealthy place,
Woolly-winged and gossamer-gray,
The woodland moths come fluttering,
Marked and mottled with lichen hues,
Seal-soft umbers and downy blues,
Dark as the bark to which they cling.

Now in the hollow of a hill,—
Like a glow-worm held in a giant hand,—
Under the sunset's last red band,
And one star hued like a daffodil,
The windowed lamp of a cabin glows,—
The charcoal-burner's, whose hut is poor,
But ever open; beside whose door
An oak grows gnarled and a pine stands slim.
Clean of heart and of feature grim,
Here he houses where no one knows,
His only neighbors the cawing crows
That make a roost of the pine's top limb;
His only friend the fiddle he bows
As he sits at his door in the eve's repose,
Making it chuckle and sing and speak,
Lovingly pressed to his swarthy cheek.

And over many a root, through ferns and weeds,
Past lonely places where the raccoon breeds,
By many a rock and water lying dim,

Roofed with the brier and the bramble-rose,
Under a star and the new-moon's rim,
Downward the wood-way leads to him,
Down where the lone lamp gleams and glows,
A pencil slim
Of marigold light under leaf and limb.

XI

Ere that small sisterhood of misty stars,
The Pleiades, consents to grace the sky;
While yet through sunset's tiger-tawny bars
The evening-star shines downward like an eye,
A torch, Enchantment, in her topaz tower
Of twilight, kindles at the Day's last hour,
Listen, and you may hear, now low, now high,
A voice, a spirit, dreamier than a flower.

There is a fellowship so still and sweet,
A brotherhood, that speaks, unwordable,
In every tree, in every flower you meet,

The soul is fain to sit beneath its spell.—
And heart-admitted to their presence there,
Those intimacies of the earth and air,
It shall hear words, too wonderful to tell,
Too deep to interpret, of unspoken prayer.

And you may see the things no eyes have seen,
And hear the things no ears have ever heard;
The Murmur of the Woods, in gray and green,
Will lean to you, its soul a whispered word;
Or by your side, in hushed and solemn wise,
The Silence sit; and, clothed in glimmering dyes
Of pearl and purple, herding bee and bird,
The Dusk steal by you with her shadowy eyes.

Then through the Ugliness that toils in night,
Uncouth, obscure, that hates the glare of day,
The things that pierce the earth and know no light,
And hide themselves in clamminess and clay,—

The dumb, ungainly things, that make a home
Of mud and mire they hill and honeycomb,—
Through these, perhaps, in some mysterious way,
Beauty may speak fairer than wind-blown foam.

Not as it speaks, an eagle message, drawn
From starry vastness of night's labyrinths:
Not uttering itself from out the dawn
In egret hues; nor from the cloud-built plinths
Of sunset's splendor,—speaking burningly
Unto the spirit;—nor all flowery
From cygnet-colored cymes of hyacinths,—
But from the things that type humility.

From things despised:—even from the crawfish there,
Hollowing its house of ooze—a wet, vague sound
Of sleepy slime; or from the mole, whose lair,
Blind-tunnelled, corridores the earth around,
Beauty may draw her truths, as draws its wings

The butterfly from the dull worm that clings,
Cocoon and chrysalis; and from the ground
Address the soul through even senseless things.

For oft my soul hath heard the trees' huge roots
Fumble the darkness, clutching at the soil;
Hath heard the green beaks of th' imprisoned shoots
Peck at the boughs from which the leaves uncoil;
Hath heard the buried germ soft split its pod,
Groping its blind way up to light and God;
The mushroom, laboring with gnome-like toil,
Heave slow its white orb through the encircling sod.

The winds and waters, stars and streams and flowers,
The earth and rocks, each moss-tuft and each fern,
The very lichens speak.—This world of ours

Is eloquent with things that bid us learn
To pierce appearances, and so to mark,
Within the stone and underneath the bark,—
Heard through some inward sense,—the dreams
that turn
Outward to light and beauty from the dark.

XII

I stood alone in a mountain place,
And it came to pass, as I gazed on space,
That I met with Mystery, face to face.

Within her eyes my wondering soul beheld
The eons past, the eons yet to come,
At cosmic labor; and the stars,—that swelled,
Fiery or nebulous, from the darkness dumb,
In each appointed place and period,—
I saw were words, whose hieroglyphic sum
Blazoned one word, the mystic name of God.

I walked alone 'mid the forest's maze,
And it came to pass, as I went my ways,
That I met with Beauty, face to face.

Within her eyes my worshipping spirit saw
The moments busy with the dreams whence spring
Earth's loveliness: and all fair things that awe
Man's soul with their perfection—everything
That buds and bourgeons, blossoming above,—
I saw were letters of enduring Law
That bloomed one word, the beautiful name of Love.

WHIPPOORWILL TIME

Let down the bars; drive in the cows:
The west is barred with burning rose.
Unhitch the horses from the ploughs,
And from the cart the ox that lows,
And light the lamp within the house:
The whippoorwill is calling,
"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,"
Where the locust blooms are falling
On the hill;
The sunset's rose is dying,
And the whippoorwill is crying,
"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill";
Soft, now shrill,
The whippoorwill is crying,
"Whippoorwill."

Unloose the watch-dog from his chain:
The first stars wink their drowsy eyes:
A sheep-bell tinkles in the lane,
And where the shadow deepest lies
A lamp makes bright the window-pane:
The whippoorwill is calling,
"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,"
Where the berry-blooms are falling
On the rill;
The first faint stars are springing,
And the whippoorwill is singing,
"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill";
Softly still
The whippoorwill is singing,
"Whippoorwill."

The cows are milked; the cattle fed;
The last far streaks of evening fade:
The farm-hand whistles in the shed,
And in the house the table 's laid;

Its lamp streams on the garden-bed:
The whippoorwill is calling,
"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,"
Where the dogwood blooms are falling
On the hill;
The afterglow is waning
And the whippoorwill's complaining,
"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill";
Wild and shrill,
The whippoorwill 's complaining,
"Whippoorwill."

The moon blooms out, a great white rose;
The stars wheel onward toward the west:
The barnyard-cock wakes once and crows;
The farm is wrapped in peaceful rest;
The cricket chirs; the firefly glows:
The whippoorwill is calling,
"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,"
Where the bramble-blooms are falling

On the rill;
The moon her watch is keeping
And the whippoorwill is weeping,
"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill";
Lonely still,
The whippoorwill is weeping,
"Whippoorwill."

MYSTERIES

Soft and silken and silvery brown,
In shoes of lichen and leafy gown,
  Little blue butterflies fluttering around her,
Deep in the forest, afar from town,
There where a stream came trickling down,
I met with Silence, who wove a crown
  Of sleep whose mystery bound her.

I gazed in her eyes, that were mossy green
As the rain that pools in a hollow between
  The twisted roots of a tree that towers:
And I saw the things that none has seen,—
That mean far more than facts may mean,—
The dreams, that are true, of an age that has
    been,
  That God has thought into flowers.

I gazed on her lips, that were dewy gray
As the mist that clings, at the close of day,
To the wet hillside when the winds cease blowing;
And I heard the things that none may say,—
That are holier far than the prayers we pray,—
The murmured music God breathes alway
Through the hearts of all things growing.

Soft and subtle and vapory white,
In shoes of shadow and gown of light,
Crimson poppies asleep around her,
Far in the forest, beneath a height,
I came on Slumber, who wove from night
A wreath of silence, that, darkly bright,
With its mystic beauty bound her.

I looked in her face that was pale and still
As the moon that rises above the hill
Where the pines loom sombre as sorrow:

And the things that all have known and will,
I knew for a moment:—the myths that fill
And people the past of the soul and thrill
Its hope with a far to-morrow.

I heard her voice, that was strange with pain
As a wind that whispers of wreck and rain
To the leaves of the autumn rustling lonely:
And I felt the things that are felt in vain
By all—the longings that haunt the brain
Of man, that come and depart again
And are part of his dreamings only.

THE SOLITARY

Upon the mossed rock by the spring
She sits, forgetful of her pail,
Lost in remote remembering
Of that which may no more avail.

Her thin, pale hair is dimly dressed
Above a brow lined deep with care,
The color of a leaf long pressed,
A faded leaf that once was fair.

You may not know her from the stone
So still she sits who does not stir,
Thinking of this one thing alone—
The love that never came to her.

A YELLOW ROSE

The old gate clicks, and down the walk,
Between clove-pink and hollyhock,
Still young of face though gray of lock,
Among her garden's flowers she goes
    At evening's close,
Deep in her hair a yellow rose.

The old house shows one gable-peak
Above its trees; and sage and leek
Blend with the rose their scents: the creek,
Leaf-hidden, past the garden flows,
    That on it snows
Pale petals of the yellow rose.

The crickets pipe in dewy damps;
And everywhere the fireflies' lamps

Flame like the lights of Faery camps;
While, overhead, the soft sky shows
One star that glows,
As, in gray hair, a yellow rose.

There is one spot she seeks for, where
The roses make a fragrant lair,
A spot where once *he* kissed her hair,
And told his love, as each one knows,
Each flower that blows,
And pledged it with a yellow rose.

The years have turned her dark hair gray
Since that glad day: and still, they say,
She keeps the tryst as on that day;
And through the garden softly goes,
At evening's close,
Wearing for him that yellow rose.

THE OLD HOME

An old lane, an old gate, an old house by a tree;
A wild wood, a wild brook—they will not let me be:
In boyhood I knew them, and still they call to me.

Down deep in my heart's core I hear them and my eyes
Through tear-mists behold them beneath the oldtime skies,
'Mid bee-boom and rose-bloom and orchard-lands arise.

I hear them; and heartsick with longing is my soul,

To walk there, to dream there, beneath the
sky's blue bowl;
Around me, within me, the weary world made
whole.

To talk with the wild brook of all the long-ago;
To whisper the wood-wind of things we used to
know
When we were old companions, before my heart
knew woe.

To walk with the morning and watch its rose
unfold;
To drowse with the noontide lulled on its heart
of gold;
To lie with the night-time and dream the dreams
of old.

To tell to the old trees, and to each listening
leaf,

The longing, the yearning, as in my boyhood
brief,
The old hope, the old love, would ease me of
my grief.

The old lane, the old gate, the old house by the
tree,
The wild wood, the wild brook—they will not
let me be:
In boyhood I knew them, and still they call to
me.

THE OLD HERB-MAN

On the barren hillside lone he sat;
On his head he wore a tattered hat;
In his hand he bore a crooked staff;
Never heard I laughter like his laugh,
  On the barren hillside, thistle-hoar.

Cracked his laughter sounded, harsh as woe,
As the croaking, thinned, of a crow:
At his back hung, pinned, a wallet old,
Bulged with roots and simples caked with mould:
  On the barren hillside in the wind.

Roots of twisted twin-leaf; sassafras;
Bloodroot, tightly whipped 'round with grass;
Adder's-tongue; and, tipped brown and black,

Yellowroot and snakeroot filled his pack,
On the barren hillside, winter-stripped.

There is nothing sadder than old age;
Nothing saddens more than that stage
When, forlornly poor, bent with toil,
One must starve or wring life from the soil,
From the barren hillside, wild and hoar.

Down the barren hillside slow he went,
Cursing at the cold, bowed and bent;
With his bag of mould, herbs and roots,
In his clay-stained garments, clay-caked boots,
Down the barren hillside, poor and old.

THE MAN HUNT

The woods stretch wild to the mountain-side,
And the brush is deep where a man may hide.

They have brought the bloodhounds up again
To the roadside rock where they found the slain.

They have brought the bloodhounds up, and they
Have taken the trail to the mountain way.

Three times they circled the trail and crossed,
And thrice they found it and thrice they lost.

Now straight through the trees and the under-
brush
They follow the scent through the forest's hush.

And their deep-mouthed bay is a pulse of fear
In the heart of the wood that the man must hear.

The man who crouches among the trees
From the stern-faced men who follow these.

A huddle of rocks that the ooze has mossed—
And the trail of the hunted again is lost.

An upturned pebble; a bit of ground
A heel has trampled—the trail is found.

And the woods re-echo the bloodhounds' bay
As again they take to the mountain way.

A rock; a ribbon of road; a ledge,
With a pine-tree clutching its crumbling edge.

A pine, that the lightning long since clave,
Whose huge roots hollow a ragged cave.

A shout; a curse; and a face aghast,
And the human quarry is laired at last.

The human quarry with clay-clogged hair
And eyes of terror who waits them there.

That glares and crouches and rising then
Hurls clods and curses at dogs and men.

Until the blow of a gun-butt lays
Him stunned and bleeding upon his face.

A rope, a prayer, and an oak-tree near,
And a score of hands to swing him clear.

A grim, black thing for the setting sun
And the moon and the stars to look upon.

THE VALE OF TEMPE

All night I lay upon the rocks:
And now the dawn comes up this way,
One great star trembling in her locks
Of rosy ray.

I can not tell the things I 've seen;
The things I 've heard I dare not speak.—
The dawn is breaking gold and green
O'er vale and peak.

My soul hath kept its tryst again
With *her* as once in ages past,
In that lost life, I know not when,
Which was my last.

When she was Dryad, I was Faun,
And lone we loved in Tempe's Vale,

Where once we saw Endymion
Pass passion-pale:

Where once we saw him clasp and meet
Among the pines, with kiss on kiss,
Moon-breasted and most heavenly sweet,
White Artemis.

Where often, Bacchus-borne, we heard
The Mænad shout, wild-revelling;
And filled with witchraft, past all word,
The Limnad sing.

Bloom-bodied 'mid the twilight trees
We saw the Oread, who shone
Fair as a form Praxiteles
Carved out of stone.

And oft, goat-footed, in a glade
We marked the Satyrs dance: and great,

Man-muscled, like the oaks that shade
Dodona's gate,

Fierce Centaurs hoof the torrent's bank
With wind-swept manes, or leap the crag,
While swift, the arrow in its flank,
Swept by the stag.

And, minnow-white, the Naiad there
We watched, foam-shouldered, in her stream
Wringing the moisture from her hair
Of emerald gleam.

We saw the oak unclose and, brown,
Sap-scented, from its door of bark
The Hamadryad's form step down:
Or, crouching dark

Within the oak's deep heart, we felt
Her eyes that pierced the fibrous gloom;

Her breath, that was the nard we smelt,
The wild perfume. . . .

There is no flower, that opens glad
Soft eyes of dawn and sunset hue,
As fair as the Limoniad
We saw there too:

That flow'r-divinity, rose-born,
Of sunlight and white dew, whose blood
Is fragrance, and whose heart of morn
A crimson bud.

There is no star, that rises white
To tip-toe down the deeps of dusk,
Sweet as the moony Nymphs of Night
With breasts of musk,

We met among the mystery
And hush of forests,—where, afar,

We watched their hearts beat glimmeringly,
Each heart a star.—

There is no beam, that rays the marge
Of mist that trails from cape to cape,
From panther-haunted gorge to gorge,
Bright as the shape

Of her, the one Auloniad,
That, born of wind and grassy gleams,
Silvered upon our sight, dim-clad
In foam of streams.

All, all of these I saw again,
Or dreamed I saw, as there, ah me!
Upon the cliffs, above the plain,
In Thessaly,

I lay, while Mount Olympus helmed
Its brow with moon-effulgence deep,

And, far below, vague, overwhelmed
With reedy sleep,

Peneus flowed, and, murmuring, sighed,
Meseemed, for its dead gods, whose ghosts
Through its dark forests seemed to glide
In shadowy hosts.

'Mid whose pale shapes again I spoke
With her, my soul, as I divine,
Dim 'neath some gnarled Olympian oak,
Or Ossan pine,

Till down the slopes of heaven came
Those daughters of the dawn, the Hours,
Clothed on with raiment blue of flame,
And crowned with flowers;

When she, with whom my soul once more
Had trysted—limbed of light and air—

Whom to my breast, (as oft of yore
In Tempe there,

When she was Dryad, I was Faun,)
I clasped and held, and pressed and kissed,
Within my arms, as broke the dawn,
Became a mist.

MARIANA

"*There, at the moated grange, resides this dejected Mariana.*"—SHAKESPEARE.

THE sunset-crimson poppies are departed,
Mariana!
The dusky-centred, sultry-smelling poppies,
The drowsy-hearted,
That burnt like flames along the garden coppice:
All heavy-headed,
The ruby-cupped and opium-brimming poppies,
That slumber wedded,
Mariana!
The sunset-crimson poppies are departed.
Oh, heavy, heavy are the hours that fall,
The lonesome hours of the lonely days!
No poppy strews oblivion by the wall,
Where lone the last pod sways,—

Oblivion that was hers of old that happier made
her days.
Oh, weary, weary is the sky o'er all,
The days that creep, the hours that crawl,
And weary all the ways—
She leans her face against the old stone wall,
The lichened wall, the mildewed wall,
And dreams, the long, long days,
Of one who will not come again whatever may
befall.

. . . . . .

All night it blew. The rain streamed down
And drowned the world in misty wet.
At morning, 'round the sunflower's crown
A row of glimmering drops was set;
The candytuft, heat shrivelled brown,
And beds of drought-dried mignonette,
Were beat to earth: but wearier, oh,
The rain was than the sun's fierce glow
That in the garth had wrought such woe:

That killed the moss-rose ere it bloomed,
  And scorched the double-hollyhocks;
And bred great, poisonous weeds that doomed
  The snapdragon and standing-phlox;
'Mid which gaunt spiders wove and loomed
  Their dusty webs 'twixt rows of box;
And rotted into sleepy ooze
The lilied moat, that, lined with yews,
Lay scummed with many sickly hues.

How oft she longed and prayed for rain!
  To blot the hateful landscape out!
To heal her heart, so parched with pain,
  With sounds of coolth and broken drought;
And cure with change her stagnant brain,
  And soothe to sleep all care and doubt.
At last—when many days had past—
And she had ceased to care—at last
The longed-for rain came, falling fast.

At night, as late she lay awake,
And thought of him who had not come,
She heard the gray wind, moaning, shake
Her lattice; then the steady drum
Of storm upon the leads. . . . The ache
Within her heart, so burdensome,
Grew heavier with the moan of rain.
The house was still, save, at her pane
The wind cried; hushed, then cried again.

All night she lay awake and wept:
There was no other thing to do:
At dawn she rose and, silent, crept
Adown the stairs that led into
The dripping garth, the storm had swept
With ruin; where, of every hue,
The flowers lay rotting, stained with mould;
Where all was old, unkempt and old,
And ragged as a marigold.

She sat her down, where oft she sat,
Upon a bench of marble, where,
In lines she oft would marvel at,
A Love was carved.—She did not dare
Look on it then, remembering that
Here in past time *he* kissed her hair,
And murmured vows while, soft above,
The full moon lit the form thereof,
The slowly crumbling form of Love.

She could but weep, remembering hours
Like these. Then in the drizzling rain,
That weighed with wet the dying flowers,
She sought the old stone dial again;
The dial, among the moss-rose bowers,
Where often she had read, in vain,
Of time and change, and love and loss,
Rude-lettered and o'ergrown with moss,
That slow the gnomon moved across.

Remembering this she turned away,
  The rain and tears upon her face.
There was no thing to do or say.—
  She stood a while, a little space,
And watched the rain bead, round and gray,
  Upon the cobweb's tattered lace,
And tag the toadstool's spongy brim
With points of mist; and, orbing, dim
With fog the sunflower's ruined rim.

With fog, through which the moon at night
  Would glimmer like a spectre sail;
Or, sullenly, a blur of light,
  Like some huge glow-worm dimly trail;
'Neath which she 'd hear, wrapped deep in white,
  The far sea moaning on its shale:
While in the garden, pacing slow,
And listening to its surge and flow,
She 'd seem to hear her own heart's woe.

Now as the fog crept in from sea,—
A great, white darkness, like a pall,—
The yews and huddled shrubbery,
That dripped along the weedy wall,
Turned phantoms; and as shadowy
She too seemed, wandering 'mid it all—
A phantom, pale and sad and strange,
And hopeless; doomed for aye to range
About the melancholy grange.

. . . . . .

The pansies too are dead, the violet-varied,
Mariana!
The raven-dyed and fire-fretted pansies,
To memory married;
That from the grass, like forms in old romances,
Raised fairy faces:
All dead they lie, the violet-velvet pansies,
In many places,
Mariana!

The pansies too are dead, the violet-varied.
Oh, hateful, hateful are the hours that pass,
  The lonely hours of the lonesome nights!
No pansy scatters heartsease through the grass,
  That autumn sorrow blights,
The heartsease that was hers of old that happier
    made her nights.
Oh, barren, barren is her life, alas!
Its youth and beauty, all it has,
  And barren all delights—
She lays her face against the withered grass,
The sodden grass, the autumn grass,
  And thinks, the long, long nights,
Of one who will not come again whatever comes
    to pass.

THE FOREST OF SHADOWS

Deep in the hush of a mighty wood
I came to a place of dread and dream,
And forms of shadows, whose shapes elude
The searching swords of the sun's dim gleam,
Builders of silence and solitude.
And there where a glimmering water crept
From rock to rock with a slumberous sound,
Tired to tears, on the mossy ground,
Under a tree I lay and slept.

Was it the heart of an olden oak?
Was it the soul of a flower that died?
Or was it the wildrose there that spoke,
The wilding lily that palely sighed?—
For all on a sudden it seemed I awoke:

And the leaves and the flowers were all intent
  On a visible something of light and bloom—
  A presence, felt as a wild perfume
Or beautiful music, that came and went.

And all the grief, I had known, was gone;
  And all the anguish of heart and soul;
And the burden of care that had made me wan
  Lifted and left me strong and whole
As once in the flush of my youth's dead dawn.
And, lo! it was night. And the oval moon,
  A silvery silence, paced the wood:
  And there in its light like snow she stood,
As starry still as a star aswoon.

At first I thought that I looked into
  A shadowy water of violet,
Where the faint reflection of one I knew,
  Long dead, gazed up from its mirror wet,
Till she smiled in my face as the living do;

Till I felt her touch, and heard her say,
In a voice as still as a rose unfolds,—
"You have come at last; and now nothing holds;
Give me your hand; let us wander away.

"Let us wander away through the Shadow Wood,
Through the Shadow Wood to the Shadow Land,
Where the trees have speech and the blossoms brood
Like visible music; and hand in hand
The winds and the waters go rainbow-hued:
Where ever the voice of beauty sighs;
And ever the dance of dreams goes on;
Where nothing grows old; and the dead and gone,
And the loved and lost, smile into your eyes.

"Let us wander away! let us wander away!—
Do you hear them calling, 'Come here and live'?
Do you hear what the trees and the flowers say,
Wonderful, wild, and imperative,
Hushed as the hues of the dawn of day?
They say, 'Your life, that was rose and rue
In a world of shadows where all things die,
Where beauty is dust and love, a lie,
Is finished.—Come here! we are waiting for you!'"

And she took my hand: and the trees around
Seemed whispering something I dared not hear:
And the taciturn flowers, that strewed the ground,
Seemed thinking something I felt with fear,
A beautiful something that made no sound.
And she led me on through the forest old,

Where the moon and the midnight stood on guard,—
Sentinel spirits that shimmered the sward,
Silver and sable and glimmering gold.

And then in an instant I knew. I knew
What the trees had whispered, the winds had said;
What the flowers had thought in their hearts of dew,
And the stars had syllabled overhead,
And she bent above me and smiled, "'T is true!
Heart of my heart, you have heard aright.—
Look in my eyes and draw me near!
Look in my eyes and have no fear!—
Heart of my heart, you died to-night!"

THE AWAKENING

God made that night of pearl and ivory,
Perfect and holy as a holy thought
Born of perfection, dreams, and ecstasy,
In love and silence wrought.
And she, who lay where, through the casement falling,
The moonlight clasped with arms of vapory gold
Her Danaë beauty, seemed to hear a calling
Deep in the garden old.

And then it seemed, through some strange sense, she heard
The roses softly speaking in the night.—
Or was it but the nocturne of a bird
Haunting the white moonlight?

It seemed a fragrant whisper vaguely roaming
From rose to rose, a language sweet that blushed,
Saying, "Who comes? Who is this swiftly coming,
With face so dim and hushed?

"And now, and now we hear a wild heart beating—
Whose heart is this that beats among our blooms?
Whose every pulse in rapture keeps repeating
Wild words like wild perfumes."—
And then it ceased: and then she heard a sigh,
As if a lily syllabled sweet scent,—
Or was it but the wind that silverly
Touched some stringed instrument?

And then again a rumor she detected
Among the roses, words of musk and myrrh,

Saying, "He comes! the one she hath expected,
Who long hath sought for her.
The one whose coming made her soul awaken;
Whose face is fragrance and whose feet are fire:
The one by whom her being shall be shaken
With dreams and deep desire."

And then she rose; and to the casement hastened,
And flung it wide and, leaning outward, gazed;
Above, the night hung, moon and starlight chastened;
Below, with shadows mazed,
The garden bloomed. Around her and o'erhead
All seemed at pause—save one wild star that streamed,
One rose that fell. And then she sighed and said,
"I must have dreamed, have dreamed."

And then again she seemed to hear it speak,
A moth that murmured of a star attained,—

Or was it but the fountain whispering weak,
White where the moonbeams rained?
And still it grew; and still the sound insisted,
Louder and sweeter, burning into form,
Until at last a presence, starlight-misted,
It shone there rosy warm.

Crying, "Come down! long have I watched and waited!
Come down! draw near! or, like some splendid flower,
Let down thy hair! so I may climb as fated
Into thy heart's high tower.
Lower! bend lower! so thy heart may hear me,
Thy soul may clasp me!—Beautiful above
All beautiful things, behold me, yea, draw near me!
Behold! for I am Love."

MUSIC AND MOONLIGHT

White roses, like a mist
Upon a terraced height,
And 'mid the roses, opal, moonbeam-kissed,
A fountain falling white.

And as the full moon flows,
Orbed fire, into a cloud,
There is a fragrant sound as if a rose
Had sighed its soul aloud.

There is a whisper pale,
As if a rose awoke,
And, having heard in sleep the nightingale,
Still dreaming of it spoke.

Now, as from some vast shell
A giant pearl rolls white,
From the dividing cloud, that winds compel,
The moon sweeps, big and bright.

Moon-mists and pale perfumes,
Wind-wafted through the dusk:
There is a sound as if unfolding blooms
Voiced their sweet thoughts in musk.

A spirit is abroad
Of music and of sleep:
The moon and mists have made for it a road
Adown the violet deep.

It breathes a tale to me,
A tale of ancient day;
And like a dream again I seem to see
Those towers old and gray.

That castle by the foam,
Where once our hearts made moan:
And through the night again you seem to come
Down statued stairs of stone.

Again I feel your hair,
Dark, fragrant, deep and cool:
You lift your face up, pale with its despair,
And wildly beautiful.

Again your form I strain;
Again, unto my heart:
Again your lips, again and yet again,
I press—and then we part.

As centuries ago
We did in Camelot;
Where once we lived that life of bliss and woe,
That you remember not.

When you were Guinevere,
And I was Launcelot . . .
I have remembered many and many a year,
And you—you have forgot.

BERTRAND DE BORN

Knight and Troubadour, to his Lady the Beautiful Maenz of Martagnac

THE burden of the sometime years,
That once my soul did overweigh,
Falls from me, with its griefs and fears,
When gazing in thine eyes of gray;
Wherein, behold, like some bright ray
Of dawn, thy heart's fond love appears,
To cheer my life upon its way.

Thine eyes! the daybreak of my heart!
That give me strength to do and dare;
Whose beauty is a radiant part
Of all my songs; the music there;
The morning, that makes dim each care,

And glorifies my mind's dull mart,
And helps my soul to do and dare.

God, when He made thy fresh fair face,
And thy young body, took the morn
And made thee like a rose, whose race
Is not of Earth; without a thorn,
And dewed thee with the joy that 's born
Of love, wherein hope hath its place
Like to the star that heralds morn.

I go my way through town and thorp:
In court and hall and castle bower
I tune my lute and strike my harp:
And often from some twilight tower
A lady drops to me a flower,
That bids me scale the moat's steep scarp,
And climb to love within her bower.

I heed them not, but go my ways:
What is their passion unto me!

My songs are only in thy praise;
  Thy face alone it is I see,
  That fills my heart with melody—
My sweet aubade! that makes my days
  All music, singing here in me!

One time a foul knight in his towers
  Sneered thus: "God's blood! why weary us
With this one woman all our hours!—
  Sing of *our* wenches! amorous
  Yolande and Ysoarde here!—Not thus
Shalt sing, but of *our* paramours!—
  What is thy Lady unto us!"

And then I flung my lute aside;
  And from its baldric flew my sword;
And down the hall 't was but a stride;
  And in his brute face and its word
  My gauntlet; and around the board

The battle, till all wild-beast-eyed
He lay and at his throat my sword.

Thou dost remember in Provence
The vile thing that I slew; and how
With my good jongleurs and my lance
Kept back his horde!—The memory now
Makes fierce my blood and hot my brow
With rage.—Ah, what a madman dance
We led them, and escaped somehow!

Oft times, when, in the tournament,
I see thee sitting yet uncrowned;
And bugles blow and spears are bent,
And shields and falchions clash around,
And steeds go crashing to the ground;
And thou dost smile on me,—'though spent
With war, again my soul is crowned:

And I am fire to strike and slay;
Before my face there comes a mist

Of blood; and like a flame I play
Through the loud lists; all who resist
Go down like corn; until thy wrist,
Kneeling, I kiss; the wreath they lay
Of beauty on thy head's gold mist.

And then I seize my lute and sing
Some chanson or some wild aubade
Full of thy beauty and the swing
Of swords and love which I have had
Of thee, until, with music mad,
The lists reel with thy name and ring
The echoed words of my aubade.

I am thy knight and troubadour,
Bertrand de Born, whom naught shall part
From thee: who art my life's high lure,
And wild bird of my wilder heart
And all its music: yea, who art
My soul's sweet sickness and its cure,
From which, God grant! it ne'er shall part.

THE TROUBADOUR, PONS DE CAPDEUIL

In Provence, to his Lady, Azalis de Mercœur in Anjou

The gray dawn finds me thinking still
Of thee who hadst my thoughts all night;
Of thee, who art my lute's sweet skill,
And of my soul the only light;
My star of song to whom I turn
My face and for whose love I yearn.

Thou dost not know thy troubadour
Lies sick to death; no longer sings:
That this alone may work his cure—
To feel thy white hand, weighed with rings,
Smoothed softly through his heavy hair,
Or resting with the old love there.

To feel thy warm cheek laid to his;
Thy bosom fluttering with love;
Then on his eyes and lips thy kiss—
Thy kiss alone were all enough
To heal his heart, to cure his soul,
And make his mind and body whole.

The drought, these three months past, hath slain
All green things in this weary land,
As in my life thy high disdain
Hath killed ambition: yea, my hand
Forgets its cunning; and my heart,
Sick to stagnation, all its art.

Once to my castle there at Puy,
In honor of thy beauty, came
The Angevin nobility,
To hear me sing of thee, whose fame
Was high as Helen's.—Azalis,
Hast thou forgot? Forget'st thou this?

And in the lists how often there
I broke a spear for thee? and placed
The crown of beauty on thy hair,
While thou sat'st, like the fair moon faced,
Amid the human firmament
Of faces that toward thee bent.

I take my hawk, my peregrine—
No falconer or page beside—
And ride from morn till eve begin;
I ride forgetting that I ride,
And all save this: that thou no more
Dost ride beside me as of yore.

A heron sweeps above me: I
Remember then how oft were cast
Thy hawk and mine at such: and sigh
Thinking of thee and days long past,
When through the Anjou fields and bowers
We used to hawk and hunt for hours.

And when, unhappy, I return,
  And take my lute and seek again
The terrace where, beside some urn,
  The castle gathers,—while the stain
Of sunset crimsons all the sea,—
And sing old songs once loved of thee:

The soul within me overflows
  With longing; and I seem to hear
Thy voice through fountains and the rose
  Calling afar, while, wildly near,
The rossignol makes mute my tongue
With memories of things long sung.

Here in Provence I pine for thee;
  And there in Anjou dost forget!—
All beauty here is less to me
  Than is the ribbon lightly set
At thy white throat; or, on thy foot,
The shoe that I have loved to lute.

Thy foot, that I have loved to kiss;
To kiss and sing of!—Song hath died
In me since then, my Azalis;
Since to my soul e'en that 's denied:
Thy kiss, that now alone could cure
The sick heart of thy Troubadour.

THE BALLAD OF THE ROSE

Booted and spurred he rode toward the west,
A rose, from the woman who loved him best,
Lay warm with her kisses there in his breast,
And the battle beacons were burning.

As over the draw he galloping went,
She, from the gateway's battlement,
With a wafted kiss and a warning bent—
"Beware of the ford at the turning!"

An instant only he turned in his sell,
And lightly fingered his petronel,
Then settled his sword in its belt as well,
And the horns to battle were sounding.

She watched till he reached the beacon there,
And saw its gleam on his helm and hair,

Then turned and murmured, "God keep thee,
Clare!
From that wolf of the hills and his hounding."

And on he rode till he came to the hill,
Where the road turned off by the ruined mill,
Where the stream flowed shallow and broad and
still,
And the battle beacon was burning.

Into the river with little heed,
Down from the hill he galloped his steed—
The water whispered on rock and reed,
"Death hides by the ford at the turning!"

And out of the night on the other side,
Their helms and corselets dim descried,
He saw ten bandit troopers ride,
And the horns to battle were blaring.

Then he reined his steed in the middle ford,
And glanced behind him and drew his sword,
And laughed as he shouted his battle-word,
"Clare! Clare! and my steel needs airing!"

Then down from the hills at his back there came
Ten troopers more. With a face of flame
Red Hugh of the Hills led on the same,
In the glare of the beacon's burning.

Again the cavalier turned and gazed,
Then quick to his lips the rose he raised,
And kissed it, crying, "Now God be praised!
And help her there when mourning!"

Then he rose in his stirrups and loosened rein,
And shouting his cry spurred on amain
Into the troopers to slay and be slain,
While the horns to battle were blowing.

With ten behind him and ten before,
And the battle beacon to light the shore,
Small doubt of the end in his mind he bore,
With her rose in his bosom glowing.

One trooper he slew with his petronel,
And one with his sword when his good steed fell,
And they haled him, fighting, from horse and sell
In the light of the beacon's burning.

Quoth Hugh of the Hills,—"To yonder tree
Now hang him high where she may see;
Then bear this rose and message from me—
'The ravens feast at the turning.'"

LOW-LIE-DOWN

JOHN-A-DREAMS and Harum-Scarum
Came a-riding into town:
At the Sign o' the Jug-and-Jorum
There they met with Low-lie-down.

Brave in shoes of Romany leather,
Bodice blue and gipsy gown,
And a cap of fur and feather,
In the inn sat Low-lie-down.

Harum-Scarum kissed her lightly,
Smiled into her eyes of brown,
Clasped her waist and held her tightly,
Saying, "Love me, Low-lie-down."

Then with many an oath and swagger,
As a man of great renown,

On the board he clapped his dagger,
Called for sack and sat him down.

.

So a while they laughed together:
Then he rose and with a frown
Sighed, "While still 't is pleasant weather
I must leave thee, Low-lie-down."

So away rode Harum-Scarum,
With a song rode out of town;
At the sign o' the Jug-and-Jorum
Weeping tarried Low-lie-down.

Then this John-a-dreams, in tatters,
In his pocket ne'er a crown,
Touched her saying, "Wench, what matters!
Dry your eyes and, come, sit down.

"Here 's my hand: let 's roam together,
Far away from thorp and town.

Here 's my heart for any weather,
And my dreams, too, Low-lie-down.

" Some men call me dreamer, poet;
Some men call me fool and clown—
What I am but you shall know it!
Come with me, sweet Low-lie-down."

For a little while she pondered.
Smiled and said, " Let care go drown! "
Rose and kissed him.—Forth they wandered,
John-a-dreams and Low-lie-down.

ROSE LEAVES WHEN THE ROSE IS DEAD

See how the rose leaves fall—
The rose leaves fall and fade:
And by the wall, in dusk funereal,
How leaf on leaf is laid,
Withered and soiled and frayed.

How red the rose leaves fall—
And in the ancient trees,
That stretch their twisted arms about the hall,
Burdened with mysteries,
How sadly sighs the breeze.

How soft the rose leaves fall—
The rose leaves drift and lie:
And over them dull slugs and beetles crawl,

And, palely glimmering by,
The glow-worm trails its eye.

How thick the rose leaves fall—
And strew the garden way,
For snails to slime and spotted toads to sprawl,
And, plodding past each day,
Coarse feet to tread in clay.

How fast they fall and fall—
Where Beauty, carved in stone,
With broken hands veils her dead eyes; and, tall,
White in the moonlight lone,
Looms like a marble moan.

How slow they drift and fall—
And strew the fountained pool,
That, in the nymph-carved basin by the wall,
Reflects in darkness cool
Ruin made beautiful.

How red the rose leaves fall—
Fall and like blood remain
Upon the dial's disc, whose pedestal,
Black-mossed and dark with stain,
Crumbles in sun and rain.

How wan they seem to fall
Around one where she stands
Dim in their midst, beyond the years' recall,
Reaching pale, passionate hands
Into the past's vague lands.

How still they fall and fall
Around them where they meet
As oft of old: she in her gem-pinned shawl
Of white; and he, complete
In black from head to feet.

How faint the rose leaves fall
Around them where, it seems,

He holds her clasped—parting from her and all
His heart's young hopes and dreams
There in the moon's thin beams.

Around them rose leaves fall—
And in the stress and urge
Of winds that strew them lightly over all,
With deep, autumnal surge,
There seems to rise a dirge:—

"See how the rose leaves fall
Upon thy dead, O soul!
The rose leaves of the love that once in thrall
Held thee beyond control,
Making thy heart's world whole.

"God help them still to fall
Around thee, bowed above
The face within thy heart, beneath the pall!
The perished face thereof,
The beautiful face of Love."

THE LAMP AT THE WINDOW

Like some gaunt ghost the tempest wails
Outside my door; its icy nails
Beat on the pane: and Night and Storm
Around the house, with furious flails
Of wind, from which the slant sleet hails,
Stalk up and down; or, arm in arm,
Stand giant guard; the wild-beast lair
Of their fierce bosoms black and bare. . . .
My lamp is lit, I have no fear.
Through night and storm my love draws near.

Now through the forest how they go,
With whirlwind hoofs and manes of snow,
The beasts of tempest, Winter herds!
That lift huge heads of mist and low

Like oxen; beasts of air that blow
Ice from their nostrils; winged like birds,
And bullock-breasted, onward hurled,
That shake with tumult all the world. . . .
My lamp is set where love can see,
Who through the tempest comes to me.

I press my face against the pane,
And seem to see, from wood and plain,
In phantom thousands, stormy pale,
The ghosts of forests, tempest-slain,
Vast wraiths of woodlands, rise and strain
And rock wild limbs against the gale;
Or, borne in fragments overhead,
Sow night with horror and with dread. . . .
He comes! my light is as an arm
To guide him onward through the storm.

I hear the tempest from the sky
Cry, eagle-like, its battle-cry;

I hear the night, upon the peaks,
Send back its condor-like reply;
And then again come booming by
The forest's challenge, hoarse as speaks
Hate unto hate, or wrath to wrath,
When each draws sword and sweeps the path. . . .
But let them rage! through darkness far
My bright light leads him like a star.

The cliffs, with all their plumes of pines,
Bow down high heads: the battle-lines
Of all the hills, that iron seams,
Shudder through all their rocky spines:
And under shields of matted vines
The vales crouch down: and all the streams
Are hushed and frozen as with fear
As from the deeps the winds draw near. . . .
But let them come! my lamp is lit!
Nor shall their fury flutter it.

Now 'round and 'round, with stride on stride,
In Boreal armor, darkness-dyed,
I hear the thunder of their strokes—
The heavens are rocked on every side
With all their clouds: and far and wide
The earth roars back with all its oaks. . . .
Still at the pane burns bright my light
To guide him onward through the night;
To lead love through the night and storm
Where my young heart shall make him warm.

THE MIRACLE OF THE DAWN

WHAT it would mean for you and me
If dawn should come no more!
Think of its gold along the sea,
Its rose above the shore!
That rose of awful mystery,
Our souls bow down before.

What wonder that the Inca kneeled,
The Aztec prayed and pled
And sacrificed to it, and sealed,—
With rights that long are dead,—
The marvels that it once revealed
To them it comforted.

What wonder, yea! what awe, behold!
What rapture and what tears

Were ours, if wild its rivered gold,—
That now each day appears,—
Burst on the world, in darkness rolled,
Once every thousand years!

Think what it means to me and you
To see it even as God
Evolved it when the world was new!
When Light rose, earthquake-shod,
And slow its gradual splendor grew
O'er deeps the whirlwind trod.

What shoutings then and cymballings
Arose from depth and height!
What worship-solemn trumpetings,
And thunders, burning-white,
Of winds and waves, and anthemings
Of Earth received the Light.

Think what it means to see the dawn!
The dawn, that comes each day!—

What if the East should ne'er grow wan,
Should nevermore grow gray!
That line of rose no more be drawn
Above the ocean's spray!

PENETRALIA

I AM a part of all you see
In Nature; part of all you feel:
I am the impact of the bee
Upon the blossom; in the tree
I am the sap,—that shall reveal
The leaf, the bloom,—that flows and flutes
Up from the darkness through its roots.

I am the vermeil of the rose,
The perfume breathing in its veins;
The gold within the mist that glows
Along the west and overflows
The heaven with light; the dew that rains
Its freshness down and strings with spheres
Of wet the webs and oaten ears.

I am the egg that folds the bird,
The song that beaks and breaks its shell;
The laughter and the wandering word
The water says; and, dimly heard,
The music of the blossom's bell
When soft winds swing it; and the sound
Of grass slow-creeping o'er the ground.

I am the warmth, the honey-scent
That throats with spice each lily-bud
That opens, white with wonderment,
Beneath the moon; or, downward bent,
Sleeps with a moth beneath its hood:
I am the dream that haunts it too,
That crystallizes into dew.

I am the seed within its pod;
The worm within its closed cocoon:
The wings within the circling clod,

The germ that gropes through soil and sod
To beauty, radiant in the noon:
I am all these, behold! and more—
I am the love at the world-heart's core.

THE HEAVEN-BORN

Not into these dark cities,
  These sordid marts and streets,
That the sun in his rising pities,
  And the moon with sorrow greets,
Does she, with her dreams and flowers,
  For whom our hearts are dumb,
Does she of the golden hours,
  Earth's heaven-born Beauty, come.

Afar 'mid the hills she tarries,
  Beyond the farthest streams,
In a world where music marries
  With color that blooms and beams;
Where shadow and light are wedded,
  Whose children people the Earth,

The fair, the fragrant-headed,
The pure, the wild of birth.

Where Morn with rosy kisses
Wakes ever the eyes of Day;
And, winds in her radiant tresses,
Haunts every wildwood way:
Where Eve, with her mouth's twin roses,
Her kisses sweet with balm,
The eyes of the glad Day closes,
And, crowned with stars, sits calm.

There, lost in contemplation
Of things no mortal sees,
She dwells, the incarnation
Of idealities;
Of dreams, that long have fired
Men's hearts with joy and pain,—
The far, the dear-desired,
Whom no man shall attain.

EARTH'S COMMONPLACES

THE WORLD OF FAERY

I

When in the pansy-purpled stain
Of sunset one far star is seen,
  Like some bright drop of rain,
Out of the forest, deep and green,
O'er me a Spirit seems to lean,
  The fairest of her train.

II

The Spirit, dowered with fadeless youth,
Of Lay and Legend, young as when,
  Close to her side, in sooth,
She led me from the marts of men,
A child, into her world, which then
  To me was true as truth.

III

Her hair is like the silken husk
That holds the corn, and glints and glows;
  Her brow is white as tusk;
Her body like a wilding rose,
And through her gossamer raiment shows
  Like starlight closed in musk.

IV

She smiles at me; she nods at me;
And by her looks I am beguiled
  Into the mystery
Of ways I knew when, as a child,
She led me 'mid her blossoms wild
  Of faery fantasy.

V

The blossoms that, when night is here,
Become sweet mouths that sigh soft tales;
  Or, each, a jewelled ear

Leaned to the elfin dance that trails
Down moonrayed cirques of haunted vales
To cricket song and cheer.

VI

The blossoms that, shut fast all day,—
Primrose and poppy,—darkness opes,
Slowly, to free a fay,
Who, silken-soft, leaps forth and ropes
With rain each web that, starlit, slopes
Between each grassy spray.

VII

The blossoms from which elves are born,—
Sweet wombs of mingled scent and snow,
Whose deeps are cool as morn;
Wherein I oft have heard them blow
Their pixy trumpets, silvery low
As some bee's drowsy horn.

VIII

So was it when my childhood roamed
The woodland's dim enchanted ground,
Where every mushroom domed
Its disc for them to revel 'round;
Each glow-worm forged its flame, — green-drowned
In hollow snow that foamed

IX

Of lilies,—for their lantern light,
To lamp their dance beneath the moon;
Each insect of the night,—
That rasped its thin, vibrating tune,—
And owl that raised its sleepy croon,
Made music for their flight.

X

So is it still when twilight fills
My soul with childhood's memories

That haunt the far-off hills,
And people with dim things the trees,—
With faery forms that no man sees,
And dreams that no man kills.

XI

Then all around me sway and swing
The Puck-lights of their firefly train,
Their elfin revelling;
And in the bursting pods, that rain
Their seeds around my steps, again
I hear their footsteps ring;—

XII

Their faery feet that fall once more
Within my way;—and then I see,—
As oft I saw before,—
Her Spirit rise, who shimmeringly
Fills all my world with poetry,—
The Loveliness of Yore.

THERE ARE FAIRIES

I

THERE are fairies, bright of eye,
  Who the wildflowers' warders are:
Ouphes that chase the firefly;
  Elves that ride the shooting star;
Fays who in a cobweb lie,
  Swinging on a moonbeam-bar,
Or who harness bumblebees,
Grumbling on the clover leas,
To a blossom or a breeze,
  That 's their fairy car.
If you care, you too may see
There are fairies—verily
  There are fairies.

II

There are fairies. I could swear
I have seen them busy where
Rose leaves loose their scented hair,
  In the moonlight weaving—weaving
Out of starshine and the dew
Glinting gown and shimmering shoe;
Or within a glow-worm lair
  From the dark earth slowly heaving
Mushrooms whiter than the moon,
On whose tops they sit and croon,
With their grig-like mandolins,
To fair fairy ladykins,
Leaning from the window-sill
Of a rose or daffodil,
Listening to their serenade
All of cricket music made.
Follow me, oh, follow me!
Ho! away to faëry!

Where your eyes, like mine, may see
There are fairies—verily
  There are fairies.

III

There are fairies: elves that swing
In a wild and rainbow ring
Through the air, or mount the wing
Of a bat to courier news
To the fairy queen and king;
  Fays who stretch the gossamers
On which twilight hangs the dews;
  Or who whisper in the ears
Of the flowers words so sweet
  That their hearts are turned to musk
And to honey, things that beat
In their veins of gold and blue;
  Ouphes that shepherd moths of dusk—
Soft of wing and gray of hue—
Forth to pasture on the dew.

There are fairies—verily,
Verily;
For the old owl in the tree,
Hollow tree,—
He who maketh melody
For them tripping merrily,—
Told it me.
There are fairies—verily
There are fairies.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE

I

When the lily nods in slumber,
And the roses all are sleeping;
When the night hangs deep and umber,
And the stars their watch are keeping;
When the clematis uncloses
Like a hand of snowy fire,
And the golden-lipped primroses,
To the tiger-moths' desire,
Each a mouth of musk unpuckers—
Silken pouts of scented sweetness,
That they sip with honey-suckers;—
Shod with hush and winged with fleetness,
You may see the Little People,
'Round and 'round the drowsy steeple

Of a belfried hollyhock,—
Clothed in phlox and four-o'clock,
Gay of gown and pantaloon,—
Dancing by the glimmering moon,
Till the cock, the long-necked cock,
Crows them they must vanish soon.

II

When the cobweb is a cradle
For the dreaming dew to sleep in;
And each blossom is a ladle
That the perfumed rain lies deep in;
When the gleaming fireflies scribble
Darkness as with lines flame-tragic,
And the night seems some dim sibyl
Speaking gold, or wording magic
Silent-syllabled and golden;—
Capped with snapdragon and hooded
With the sweet-pea, vague-beholden,
You may see the Little People,

Underneath the sleepy steeple
Of a towering mullen-stock,
Trip it over moss and rock
To the owlet's elvish tune
And the tree-toad's gnome bassoon,
Till the cock, the barnyard cock,
Crows them they must vanish soon.

III

When the wind upon the water
Seems a boat of ray and ripple,
That some fairy moonbeam daughter
Steers with sails that drift and dripple;
When the sound of grig and cricket,
Ever singing, ever humming,
Seems a goblin in the thicket
On his elfin viol strumming;
When the toadstool, coned and milky,
Heaves a roof for snails to clamber;
Thistledown- and milkweed-silky,

With loose locks of jade and amber,
You may see the Little People,
Underneath the pixy steeple
Of a doméd mushroom, flock,
Quaint in wildflower vest and frock,
Whirling by the waning moon
To the whippoorwill's weird tune,
Till the cock, the far-off cock,
Crows them they must vanish soon.

ON MIDSUMMER NIGHT

I

All the poppies in their beds
Nodding crumpled crimson heads;
And the larkspurs, in whose ears
Twilight hangs, like twinkling tears,
Sleepy jewels of the rain;
All the violets, that strain
Eyes of amethystine gleam;
And the clover-blooms that dream
With pink baby fists closed tight,—
They can hear upon this night,
Noiseless as the moon's white light,
Footsteps and the glimmering flight,
Shimmering flight,
Of the Fairies.

II

Every sturdy four-o'clock,
In its variegated frock;
Every slender sweet-pea, too,
In its hood of pearly hue;
Every primrose pale that dozes
By the wall and slow uncloses
A sweet mouth of dewy dawn
In a little silken yawn,—
On this night of silvery sheen,
They can see the Fairy Queen,
On her palfrey white, I ween,
Tread dim cirques of haunted green,
Moonlit green,
With her Fairies.

III

Never a foxglove bell, you see,
That 's a cradle for a bee;
Never a lily, that 's a house

Where the butterfly may drowse;
Never a rosebud or a blossom,
That unfolds its honeyed bosom
To the moth, that nestles deep
And there sucks itself to sleep,—
But can hear and also see,
On this night of witchery,
All that world of Faëry,
All that world where airily,
Merrily,
Dance the Fairies.

IV

It was last Midsummer Night,
In the moon's uncertain light,
That I stood among the flowers,
And in language unlike ours
Heard them speaking of the Pixies,
Trolls and Gnomes and Water-Nixies;
How in this flow'r's ear a Fay

Hung a gem of rainy ray;
And 'round that flow'r's throat had set
Dim a dewdrop carcanet;
Then among the mignonette
Stretched a cobweb-hammock wet,
Dewy wet,
For the Fairies.

V

Long I watched; but never a one,
Ariel, Puck, or Oberon,
Mab or Queen Titania—
Fairest of them all they say—
Clad in morning-glory hues,
Did I glimpse among the dews.
Only once I thought the torch
Of that elfin-rogue and arch,
Robin Goodfellow, afar
Flashed along a woodland bar—

Bright, a jack-o'-lantern star,
A green lamp of firefly spar,
Glow-worm spar,
Loved of Fairies.

THE WILLOW WATER

Deep in the hollow wood he found a way
Winding unto a water, dim and gray,
Grayer and dimmer than the break of day;
By which a wildrose blossomed; flower on flower
Leaning above its image hour on hour,
Musing, it seemed, on its own loveliness,
And longing with sweet longing to express
Some thought to its reflection.

Dropping now
Bee-shaken pollen from th' o'erburdened bough,
And now a petal, delicate as a blush,
It seemed to sigh or whisper to the hush
The dreams, the myths and marvels it had seen
Tip-toeing dimly through the woodland green:

Faint shapes of fragrance; forms like flowers, that go
Footing the moss; or, shouldered with moon-beam glow,
Through starlit waves oaring an arm of snow.

He sat him down and gazed into the pool:
And as he gazed, two petals, silken cool,
Fell, soft as starbeams fall that arrow through
The fern-hung trembling of a drop of dew;
And, pearly-placid, on the water lay,
Two curves of languid ruby, where, rose-gray,
The shadow of a willow dimmed the stream.
And suddenly he saw—or did he dream
He saw?—the rose-leaves change to rosy lips,
A laughing crimson. And, with silvery hips,
And eyes of luminous emerald, full of sleep
And all the stillness of the under deep,
The shadow of the tree become a girl,
A shadowy girl, who shook from many a curl

Faint, tangled glimmerings of shell and pearl.
A girl who called him, beckoned him to come,
Waving a hand whiter than moonlit foam,
And pointing, minnowy fingered, to her home—
A bubble, rainbow-built, beneath the wave,
Dim-domed, and murmurous as the deep-sea cave,
Columned of coral and of grottoed foam,
Where the pale mermaids never cease to comb
Their weed-green hair with fingers crystal-cold,
Sighing forever 'round the Sea King old
Throned on his throne of shell and ribbéd gold.

Laughing, she lured him, lipped like some wild-rose;
Bidding him follow; come to her; repose
Upon her bosom and forever dream
Lulled by the wandering whisper of the stream.
But him mortality weighed heavily on
And earthly love: and, sorrowful and wan,

He shook his head, motioning, "I cannot rise";
But still he felt the magic of her eyes
Drawing him to her; felt her hands of foam
Around his heart; her lips, that bade him come
With smiling witchery, and with laughing looks
Like those that lured us in the fairy books
Our childhood dreamed on. . . .
Then, as suddenly,
A wind, it seemed, from no where he could see,
Wrinkled the water; ruffled its smooth glass;
And there again, behold! when it did pass
The rose-leaves lay and shadow, dimly seen;
The willow's shadow, and no thing between.

ELUSION

I

My soul goes out to her who says,
"Come follow me and cast off care!"
Then tosses back her sunbright hair,
And like a flower before me sways
Between the green leaves and my gaze:
This creature like a girl, who smiles
Into my eyes and softly lays
Her hand in mine and leads me miles,
Long miles of haunted forest ways.

II

Sometimes she seems a faint perfume,
A fragrance that a flower exhaled
And God gave form to; now, unveiled,
A sunbeam making gold the gloom

Of vines that roof some woodland room
Of boughs; and now the silvery sound
Of streams her presence doth assume—
Music, from which, in dreaming drowned,
A crystal shadow she seems to bloom.

III

Sometimes she seems the light that lies
On foam of waters where the fern
Shimmers and drips; now, at some turn
Of woodland, bright against the skies,
She seems the rainbowed mist that flies;
And now the mossy fire that breaks
Beneath the feet in azure eyes
Of flowers; and now the wind that shakes
Pale petals from the bough that sighs.

IV

Sometimes she lures me with a song;
Sometimes she guides me with a laugh;

Her white hand is a magic staff,
Her look a spell to lead me long:
Though she be weak and I be strong,
She needs but shake her happy hair,
But glance her eyes, and, right or wrong,
My soul must follow—anywhere
She wills—far from the world's loud throng.

V

Sometimes I think that she must be
No part of earth, but merely this—
The fair, elusive thing we miss
In Nature, that we dream we see
Yet never see: that goldenly
Beckons: that, limbed with rose and pearl,
The Greek made a divinity:—
A nymph, a god, a glimmering girl,
That haunts the forest's mystery.

THE LOST GARDEN

Roses, brier on brier,
Like a hedge of fire,
Walled it from the world and rolled
Crimson 'round it; manifold
Blossoms, 'mid which once of old
Walked my Heart's Desire.

There the golden Hours
Dwelt; and 'mid the bowers
Beauty wandered like a maid;
And the Dreams that never fade
Sat within its haunted shade
Gazing at the flowers.

There the winds that vary
Melody and marry

Perfume unto perfume, went,
Whispering to the buds, that bent,
Messages whose wonderment
Made them sweet to carry.

There the waters hoary
Murmured many a story
To the leaves that leaned above,
Listening to their tales of love,
While the happiness thereof
Flushed their green with glory.

There the sunset's shimmer
'Mid the bowers,—dimmer
Than the woods where Fable dwells,
And Romance her legends tells,—
Wrought dim dreams and dimmer spells,
Filled with golden glimmer.

There at night the wonder
Of the moon would sunder

Foliage deeps with breast of pearl,
Wandering like a glimmering girl,
Fair of form and bright of curl,
Through the trees and under.

There the stars would follow,
Over hill and hollow,
Spirit shapes that danced the dew
From frail cups of sparry hue;
Firefly forms that fleeter flew
Than the fleetest swallow.

There my heart made merry;
There, 'mid bloom and berry,
Dreamed the dreams that are no more,
In that garden lost of yore,
Set in seas, without a shore,
That no man may ferry.

Where perhaps her lyre,—
Wreathed with serest brier,—

Sorrow strikes now; sad its gold
Sighing where, 'mid roses old,
Fair of face and dead and cold
Lies my Heart's Desire.

GLAMOUR

With fall on fall, from wood to wood,
The brook pours mossy music down—
Or is it, in the solitude,
The murmur of a Faery town?

A town of Elfland filled with bells
And holiday of hurrying feet:
Or traffic now, whose small sound swells,
Now sinks from busy street to street.

Whose Folk I often recognize
In wingéd things that hover 'round,
Who to men's eyes assume disguise
When on some elfin errand bound.

The bee, that haunts the touchmenot,—
  Big-bodied, making braggart din—
Is fairy brother to that sot,
  Jack Falstaff of the Boar's Head Inn.

The dragonfly, whose wings of black
  Are mantle for his garb of green,
Is Ancient to this other Jack,—
  Another Pistol, long and lean.

The butterfly, in royal tints,
  Is Hal, mad Hal, in cloth of gold,
Who passes these, as once that Prince
  Passed his companions boon of old.

LATE OCTOBER WOODS

Clumped in the shadow of the beech,—
  In whose brown top the crows are loud,—
Where, every side, great briers reach
  And cling like hands,—the beechdrops crowd
The mossy cirque with neutral tints
  Of gray; and deep, with berries bowed,
The buckbush reddens 'mid the mints.

O'erhead the forest scarcely stirs:
  The wind is laid: the sky is blue:
Bush-clover, with its links of burs,
  And some last blooms,—few, pink of hue,—
Makes wild the way: and everywhere
  Slim, white-ribbed cones of fungi strew
The grass that 's like a wildman's hair.

The jewel-weeds, whose pods bombard
  The hush with fairy batteries
Of seeds, grow dense here; pattering hard
  Their sacs explode, persuade the eyes
To search the heaven for show'rs.—One seems
  To walk where old Enchantment plies
Her shuttle of lost days and dreams.

And, lo! yon rock of fern and flower,
  That heaves its height from bramble deeps,
All on a sudden seems the tower
  Wherein the Sleeping Beauty sleeps:
And that red vine, the fire-drake,
  The flaming dragon, seems, that keeps
The world from her no man may wake.

IN THE BEECH WOODS

Amber and emerald, cairngorm and chrysoprase,
Stream through the autumn woods, scatter the beech-wood ways:
Ways where the wahoo-bush brightens with scarlet;
And where the aster-stalk lifts its last starlet.

Ways where the brier burns; poplars drop, one by one,
Leaves that seem beaten gold, each like a splash of sun:
'Round which the beeches rise, tree upon golden tree,
That, with each wind that blows, sound like a summer sea.

Ways where the papaw leans, great-leaved and beryl-green,
Like some grand forester one in Romance hath seen;
And like some Indian queen, sung of in story,
Flaming the gum-tree stands, crowned with its glory.

Ways where the bittersweet, cleaving its pods of gold,
Brightens the brake with flame, torches the dingle old:
And where the dogwood too crimsons with ruby seeds;
Spicewood and buckbush bend ruddy with rosy beads.

These are the woods of gold; forests our childhood knew,
Where the Enchanted dwelt, she with the eyes of blue;

She of the raven locks, and of the lovely looks,
She who oft gazed at us out of the Story Books.

And with that Prince again, striding his snow-white steed,
To her deliverance through the gold wood we speed;
On through the wood of flame to the Dark Tower,
Where like a light she gleams high in her bower.

THE WORD IN THE WOOD

I

The acorn-oak
Sullens to sombre crimson all its leaves;
And where it hugely heaves
A giant head dark as congested blood,
The gum-tree towers, against the sky a stroke
Of purpling gold; and every blur of wood
Is color on the pallet that she drops,
The Autumn, dreaming on the hazed hilltops.

II

And as I went
Through golden forests in a golden land,
Where Magic waved her wand
And dimmed the air with dreams my boyhood knew,

Enchantment met me; and again she bent
Her face to mine, and smiled with eyes of blue,
And kissed me on the mouth and bade me heed
Old tales again from books no man may read.

III

And at her word
The wood became transfigured; and, behold!
With hair of wavy gold
A presence walked there; and its beauty was
The beauty not of Earth: and then I heard
Within my heart vague voices, murmurous
And multitudinous as leaves that sow
The firmament when winds of autumn blow.

IV

And I perceived
The voices were but one voice made of sighs,
That sorrowed in this wise:
"I am the child-soul that grew up and died,

The child-soul of the world that once believed,
Believed in me, but long ago denied;
The Faery Faith it needs no more to-day,
The folk-lore Beauty long since passed away."

THE WOOD WATER

An evil, stealthy water, dark as hate,
Sunk from the light of day,
'Thwart which is hung a ruined water-gate,
Creeps on its stagnant way.

Moss and the spawny duckweed, dim as air,
And green as copperas,
Choke its dull current; and, like hideous hair,
Tangles of twisted grass.

Above it sinister trees,—as crouched and gaunt
As huddled Terror,—lean;
Guarding some secret in that nightmare haunt,
Some horror they have seen.

Something the sunset points at from afar,
Spearing the sullen wood
And hag-gray water with a single bar
Of flame as red as blood.

Something the stars, conspiring with the moon,
Shall look on, and remain
Frozen with fear; staring as in a swoon,
Striving to flee in vain.

Something the wisp that, wandering in the night,
Above the ghastly stream,
Haply shall find; and, filled with frantic fright,
Light with its ghostly gleam.

Something that lies there, under weed and ooze,
With wide and awful eyes
And matted hair, and limbs the waters bruise,
That strives, yet can not rise.

THE EGRET HUNTER

THROUGH woods the Spanish moss makes gray,
With deeps the daylight never reaches,
The water sluices slow its way,
And chokes with weeds its beaches.

'T was here, lost in this lone bayou,
Where poison brims each blossom's throat,
Last night I followed a firefly glow,
And oared a leaky boat.

The way was dark; and overhead
The wailing limpkin moaned and cried;
The moss, like cerements of the dead,
Waved wildly on each side.

The way was black, albeit the trees
Let here and there the moonlight through,

The shadows, 'mid the cypress-knees,
Seemed ominous of hue.

And then behold! a boat that oozed
Slow slime and trailed rank water-weeds,
Loomed on me: in which, interfused,
Great glow-worms glowed like beads.

And in its rotting hulk, upright,
His eyeless eyes fixed far before,
A dead man sat, and stared at night,
Grasping a rotting oar.

Slowly it passed; and fearfully
The moccasin slid in its wake;
The owl shrunk shrieking in its tree;
And in its hole the snake.

But I, who met it face to face,
I could not shrink or turn aside:

Within that dark and demon place
There was no place to hide.

Slowly it passed; for me too slow!
The grim Death, in the moon's faint shine,
Whose story, haply, none may know
Save th' owl that haunts the pine.

THE NIGHT-WIND

I

I HAVE heard the wind on a winter's night,
When the snow-cold moon looked icily through
My window's flickering firelight,
Where the frost his witchery drew:
I have heard the wind on a winter's night,
Wandering ways that were frozen white,
Wail in my chimney-flue:
And its voice was the voice,—so it seemed to me,—
The voice of the world's vast misery.

II

I have heard the wind on a night of spring,
When the leaves unclasped their girdles of gold,

And the bird on the bough sang slumbering,
In the lilac's fragrant fold:
I have heard the wind on a night of spring,
Shaking the musk from its dewy wing,
Sigh in my garden old:
And it seemed that it said, as it sighed above,
"I am the voice of the Earth's great love."

III

I have heard the wind on a night of fall,
When a devil's-dance was the rain's down-
pour,
And the wild woods reeled to its demon call,
And the carpet fluttered the floor:
I have heard the wind on a night of fall,
Heaping the leaves by the garden wall,
Weep at my close-shut door:
And its voice, so it seemed, as it sorrowed there,
Was the old, old voice of the world's despair.

IV

I have heard the wind on a summer night,
When the myriad stars stormed heaven with fire,
And the moon-moth glimmered in phantom flight,
And the crickets creaked in choir:
I have heard the wind on a summer night,
Rocking the red rose and the white,
Murmur in bloom and brier:
And its voice was the voice,—so it seemed to me,—
Of Earth's primordial mystery.

GOD'S GREEN BOOK

I

Out, out in the open fields,
  Where the great, green book of God,—
The book that its wisdom yields
  To each soul that is not a clod,—
Lies wide for the world to read,
I would go; and in flower and weed,
That letter the lines of the grass,
Would read of a better creed
Than that which the town-world has.

II

Too long in the city streets,
  The alleys of grime and sin,

Have I heard the iron beats
  Of the heart of toil; whose din
And the throb of whose wild unrest
Have stunned the song in my breast,
Have marred its music and slain
The bird that was once its guest,
And my soul would find it again.

III

Out there where the great, green book,
  Whose leaves are the grass and trees,
Lies open; where each may look,
  May muse and read as he please;
The book, that is gilt with gleams,
Whose pages are ribboned with streams;
That says what our souls would say
Of beauty that 's wrought of dreams
And buds and blossoms of May.

A WET DAY

Dark, drear, and drizzly, with vapor grizzly,
The day goes dully unto its close;
Its wet robe smutches each thing it touches,
Its fingers sully and wreck the rose.

Around the railing and garden-paling
The dripping lily hangs low its head:
A brood-mare whinnies; and hens and guineas
Droop, damp and chilly, beneath the shed.

In splashing mire about the byre
The cattle huddle, the farmhand plods;
While to some neighbor's a wagon labors
Through pool and puddle and clay that clods.

The day, unsplendid, at last is ended,
Is dead and buried, and night is come;—
Night, blind and footless, and foul and fruitless,
With weeping wearied and sorrow dumb.

Ah, God! for thunder! for winds to sunder
The clouds and o'er us smite rushing bars!
And through wild masses of storm, that passes,
Roll calm the chorus of moon and stars.

AFTER STORM

Great clouds of sullen seal and gold
  Bar bleak the tawny west,
From which all day the thunder rolled,
  And storm streamed, crest on crest.

Now silvery in its deeps of bronze
  The new moon fills its sphere;
And point by point the darkness dons
  Its pale stars there and here.

But still behind the moon and stars,
  The peace of heaven, remains
Suspicion of the wrath that wars,
  That Nature now restrains.

As, lined 'neath tiger eyelids, glare
The wild-beast eyes that sleep,
So smoulders in its sunset lair
The rage that rent the deep.

SUNSET ON THE RIVER

I

A SEA of onyx are the skies,
  Cloud-islanded with fire;
Such nacre-colored flame as dyes
  A sea-shell's rosy spire;
And at its edge one star sinks slow,
Burning, into the overglow.

II

Save for the cricket in the grass,
  Or passing bird that twitters,
The world is hushed. Like liquid glass
  The soundless river glitters
Between the hills that hug and hold
Its beauty like a hoop of gold.

III

The glory deepens; and, meseems,
A vasty canvas, painted
With revelations of God's dreams
And visions symbol-sainted,
The west is, that each night-cowled hill
Kneels down before in worship still.

IV

There is no thing to wake unrest;
No sight or sound to jangle
The peace that evening in the breast
Brings, smoothing out the tangle
Of gnarls and knots of care and strife
That snarl the colored cord of life.

THE RUE-ANEMONE

UNDER an oak-tree in a woodland, where
The dreaming Spring had dropped it from her hair,
I found a flower, through which I seemed to gaze
Beyond the world and see what no man dare
Behold and live—the myths of bygone days—
Diana and Endymion, and the bare
Slim beauty of the boy whom Echo wooed;
And Hyacinthus whom Apollo dewed
With love and death: and Daphne, ever fair;
And that reed-slender girl whom Pan pursued.

I stood and gazed and through it seemed to see
The Dryad dancing by the forest tree,
Her hair wild blown: the Faun with listening ear,

Deep in the boscage, kneeling on one knee,
Watching the wandered Oread draw near,
Her wild heart beating like a honey-bee
Within a rose.—All, all the myths of old,
All, all the bright shapes of the Age of Gold,
Peopling the wonder-worlds of Poetry,
Through it I seemed in fancy to behold.

What other flower, that, fashioned like a star,
Draws its frail life from earth and braves the war
Of all the heavens, can suggest the dreams
That this suggests? in which no trace of mar
Or soil exists: where stainless innocence seems
Enshrined; and where, beyond our vision far,
That inaccessible beauty, which the heart
Worships as truth and holiness and art,
Is symbolized; wherein embodied are
The things that make the soul's immortal part.

TABERNACLES

The little tents the wildflowers raise
Are tabernacles where Love prays
And Beauty preaches all the days.

I walk the woodland through and through,
And everywhere I see their blue
And gold where I may worship too.

All hearts unto their inmost shrine
Of fragrance they invite; and mine
Enters and sees the All Divine.

I hark; and with some inward ear
Soft words of praise and prayer I hear,
And bow my head and have no fear.

For God is present as I see
In them; and gazes out at me
Kneeling to His divinity.

Oh, holiness that Nature knows,
That dwells within each thing that grows,
Vestured with dreams as is the rose

With perfume! whereof all things preach—
The birds, the brooks, the leaves, that reach
Our hearts and souls with loving speech;

That makes a tabernacle of
The flowers; whose priests are Truth and Love,
Who help our souls to rise above

The Earth and that which we name sin
Unto the knowledge that is kin
To Heaven, to which at last we win.

REVEALMENT

A SENSE of sadness in the golden air,
A pensiveness, that has no part in care,
As if the Season, by some woodland pool,
Braiding the early blossoms in her hair,
Seeing her loveliness reflected there,
Had sighed to find herself so beautiful.

A breathlessness, a feeling as of fear,
Holy and dim as of a mystery near,
As if the World about us listening went,
With lifted finger, and hand-hollowed ear,
Hearkening a music that we cannot hear,
Haunting the quickening earth and firmament.

A prescience of the soul that has no name,
Expectancy that is both wild and tame,

As if the Earth, from out its azure ring
Of heavens, looked to see, as white as flame,—
As Perseus once to chained Andromeda came,—
The swift, divine revealment of the Spring.

THE CAT-BIRD

I

The tufted gold of the sassafras,
And the gold of the spicewood-bush,
Bewilder the ways of the forest pass,
And brighten the underbrush:
The white-starred drifts of the wild-plum tree,
And the haw with its pearly plumes,
And the redbud, misted rosily,
Dazzle the woodland glooms.

II

And I hear the song of the cat-bird wake
I' the boughs o' the gnarled wild-crab,
Or there where the snows of the dogwood shake
That the silvery sunbeams stab:

And it seems to me that a magic lies
In the crystal sweet of its notes,
That a myriad blossoms open their eyes
As its strain above them floats.

III

I see the bluebell's blue unclose,
And the trillium's stainless white;
The bird-foot violet's purple and rose,
And the poppy, golden-bright!
And I see the eyes of the bluet wink,
And the heads of the white-hearts nod;
And the baby mouths of the woodland pink
And the sorrel salute the sod.

IV

And this, meseems, does the cat-bird say,
As the blossoms crowd i' the sun:—
"Up, up! and out! oh, out and away!
Up, up! and out, each one!

Sweethearts! sweethearts! oh, sweet, sweet,
sweet!
Come listen and hark to me!
The Spring, the Spring, with her fragrant feet,
Is passing this way!—Oh, hark to the beat
Of her bee-like heart!—Oh, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Come! open your eyes and see!
See, see, see!"

VAGABONDS

I

It 's ho, it 's ho! when hawtrees blow
Among the hills that Springtime thrills;
When huckleberries, row on row,
Hang out their blossom-bells of snow
Around the rills that music fills:
    When hawtrees blow
    Among the hills,
It 's ho, it 's ho! oh, let us go,
My love and I, where fancy wills.

II

It 's hey, it 's hey! when daisies sway
Among the meads where Summer speeds;
When ripeness bends each fruited spray,
And harvest wafts adown the day

The feathered seeds of golden weeds:
When daisies sway
Among the meads,
It 's hey, it 's hey! oh, let 's away,
My heart and I, where longing leads.

III

It 's ay, it 's ay! when red leaves fly,
And strew the ways where Autumn strays;
When 'round the beech and chestnut lie
The sturdy burs, and creeks run dry,
And frosts and haze turn golds to grays:
When red leaves fly
And strew the ways,
It 's ay, it 's ay! oh, let us hie,
My love and I, where dreaming says.

IV

Wassail! wassail! when snow and hail
Make white the lands where Winter stands;

When wild winds from the forests flail
The last dead leaves, and, in the gale,
The trees wring hands in ghostly bands:
When snow and hail
Make white the lands,
Wassail, wassail! oh, let us trail,
My heart and I, where love commands.

NOCTURNE

A DISC of violet blue,
Rimmed with a thorn of fire,
The new moon hangs in a sky of dew;
And under the vines, where the sunset's hue
Is blent with blossoms, first one, then two,
Begins the cricket's choir.

Bright blurs of golden white,
And points of silvery glimmer,
The first stars wink in the web of night;
And through the flowers the moths take flight,
In the honeysuckle-colored light,
Where the shadowy shrubs grow dimmer.

Soft through the dim and dying eve,
Sweet through the dusk and dew,

Come, while the hours their witchcraft weave,
Dim in the House of the Soul's-Sweet-Leave,
Here in the pale and perfumed eve,
  Here where I wait for you.

A great, dark, radiant rose,
Dripping with starry glower,
Is the night, whose bosom overflows
With the balsam musk of the breeze that blows
Into the heart, as each one knows,
Of every nodding flower.

A voice that sighs and sighs,
Then whispers like a spirit,
Is the wind that kisses the drowsy eyes
Of the primrose open, and, rocking, lies
In the lily's cradle, and soft unties
The rosebud's crimson near it.

Sweet through the deep and dreaming night,
  Soft through the dark and dew,

Come, where the moments their magic write,
Deep in the Book of the Heart's-Delight,
Here in the hushed and haunted night,
Here where I wait for you.

LUTE SONG

What will you send her,
  What will you tell her,
That shall unbend her,
  That shall compel her?

Love, that shall fold her
  So naught can sever;
Truth, that shall hold her
  Ever and ever.

What will you do then
  So she 'll ne'er grieve you?
Knowing you true then
  Never will leave you?

I 'll lay before her,
There in her bower,
Aye to adore her,
My heart like a flower.

DAYS COME AND GO

Leaves fall and flowers fade,
  Days come and go:
Now is sweet Summer laid
Low in her leafy glade,
Low like a fragrant maid,
  Low, low, ah, low.

Tears fall and eyelids ache,
  Hearts overflow:
Here for our dead love's sake
Let us our farewells make—
Will he again awake?
  Ah, no, no, no.

Winds sigh and skies are gray,
  Days come and go:

Wild birds are flown away:
Where are the blooms of May?—
Dead, dead, this many a day,
  Under the snow.

Lips sigh and cheeks are pale,
  Hearts overflow:
Will not some song or tale,
Kiss, or a flower frail,
With our dead love avail?—
  Ah, no, no, no.

THE WANING YEAR

A SENSE of something that is sad and strange;
Of something that is felt as death is felt,—
As shadows, phantoms, in a haunted grange,—
Around me seems to melt.

It rises, so it seems, from the decay
Of the dim woods; from withered leaves and weeds,
And dead flowers hanging by the woodland way
Sad, hoary heads of seeds.

And from the cricket's song,—so feeble now
'T is like a sound heard in the heart, a call
Dreamier than dreams;—and from the shaken bough,
From which the acorns fall.

From scents and sounds it rises, sadly slow,
  This presence, that hath neither face nor form;
That in the woods sits like demented woe,
  Whispering of wreck and storm.

A presence wrought of melancholy grief,
  And dreams that die; that, in the streaming
    night,
I shall behold, like some fantastic leaf,
  Beat at my window's light.

That I shall hear, outside my storm-lashed door,
  Moan like the wind in some rain-tortured tree;
Or 'round my roof and down my chimney roar
  All the wild night to me.

GRAY NOVEMBER

I

Dull, dimly gleaming,
The dawn looks downward
Where, flowing townward,
The river, steaming
With mist, is hidden:
Each bush, that huddles
Beside the road,—the rain has pooled with puddles,—
Seems, in the fog, a hag or thing hag-ridden.

II

Where leaves hang tattered
In forest tangles,
And woodway angles

Are acorn-scattered,
Coughing and yawning
The woodsman slouches,
Or stands as silent as the hound that crouches
Beside him, ghostly in the mist-drenched dawning.

III

Through roses, rotting
Within the garden,—
With blooms, that harden,
Of marigolds, knotting,
(Each one an ember
Dull, dead and dripping,)
Her brow, from which their faded wreath is slipping,
Mantled in frost and fog, comes in November.

HALLOWMAS

All hushed of glee,
The last chill bee
Clings wearily
To the dying aster.
The leaves drop faster:
And all around, red as disaster,
The forest crimsons with tree on tree.

A butterfly,
The last to die,
Wings heavily by,
Weighed down with torpor.
The air grows sharper;
And the wind in the trees, like some sad harper,
Sits and sorrows with sigh on sigh.

The far crows call;
The acorns fall;
And over all
The Autumn raises
Dun mists and hazes,
Through which her soul, it seemeth, gazes
On ghosts and dreams in carnival.

The end is near;
The dying Year
Leans low to hear
Her own heart breaking,
And Beauty taking
Her flight, and all my dreams forsaking
My soul, bowed down 'mid the sad and sere.

A SONG OF THE SNOW

I

ROARING winds that rocked the crow,
  High in his eyrie,
All night long, and to and fro
Swung the cedar and drove the snow
Out of the North, have ceased to blow,
  And dawn breaks fiery

Sing, Ho, a song of the winter dawn,
When the air is still and the clouds are gone,
And the snow lies deep on hill and lawn,
  And the old clock ticks, '*T' is time! 't is time!*
And the household rises with many a yawn—
Sing, Ho, a song of the winter dawn!
    Sing Ho!

II

Deep in the East a ruddy glow
Broadens and brightens,
Glints through the icicles, row on row,
Flames on the panes of the farmhouse low,
And over the miles of drifted snow
Silently whitens.

Sing, Ho, a song of the winter sky,
When the last star closes its icy eye,
And deep in the road the snow-drifts lie,
And the old clock ticks, *'T is late! 't is late!*
And the flame on the hearth leaps red, leaps high—
Sing, Ho, a song of the winter sky!
Sing Ho!

III

Into the heav'n the sun comes slow,
All red and frowsy;

Out of the shed the muffled low
Of the cattle comes; and the rooster's crow
Sounds strangely distant beneath the snow
And dull and drowsy.

Sing, Ho, a song of the winter morn,
When the snow makes ghostly the wayside thorn,
And hills of pearl are the shocks of corn,
And the old clock ticks, *Tick-tock, tick-tock;*
And the goodman bustles about the barn—
Sing, Ho, a song of the winter morn!
Sing Ho!

IV

Now to their tasks the farmhands go,
Cheerily, cheerily:
The maid with her pail, her cheeks aglow;
And, blowing his fist, the man with his hoe
To trample a path through the crunching snow,
Merrily, merrily.

Sing, Ho, a song of the winter day,
When ermine-capped are the stacks of hay,
And the wood-smoke pillars the air with gray,
And the old clock ticks, *To work! to work!*
And the goodwife sings as she churns away—
Sing, Ho, a song of the winter day!
Sing Ho!

WHAT OF IT THEN

I

Well, what of it then, if your heart be weighed
with the yoke
Of the world's neglect? and the smoke
Of doubt, blown into your eyes, make night of
your road?
And the sting of the goad,
The merciless goad of scorn,
And the rise and fall
Of the whip of necessity gall,
Till your heart, forlorn,
Indignant, in rage would rebel?
And your bosom fill,
And sobbingly swell,
With bitterness, yea, against God and 'gainst
Fate,

Fate, and the world of men,
What of it then? . . .
Let it be as it will,
If you labor and wait,
You, too, will arrive, and the end for you, too,
will be well.
What of it then, say I! yea, what of it then!

II

Well, what of it then? if the hate of the world
and of men
Make wreck of your dreams again?
What of it then
If contumely and sneer,
And ignorant jibe and jeer,
Be heaped upon all that you do and dream:
And the irresistible stream
Of events overwhelm and submerge
All effort—or so it may seem?
Not all, not all shall be lost,

Not all, in the merciless gurge
And pitiless surge!—
Though you see it tempestuously tost,
Though you see it sink down or sweep by,
Not in vain did you strive, not in vain!
The struggle, the longing and toil
Of hand and of heart and of brain,
Not in vain was it all, say I!
For out of the wild turmoil
And seething and soil
Of Time, some part of the whole will arise,
Arise and remain,
In spite of the wrath of the skies
And the hate of men.—
What of it then, say I! yea, what of it then!

WOMANHOOD

I

THE summer takes its hue
From something opulent as fair in her,
And the bright heav'n is brighter than it was;
Brighter and lovelier,
Arching its beautiful blue,
Serene and soft, as her sweet gaze, o'er us.

II

The springtime takes its moods
From something in her made of smiles and tears,
And flowery earth is flowerier than before,
And happier, it appears,
Adding new multitudes
To flowers, like thoughts, that haunt us evermore.

III

Summer and spring are wed
In her—her nature; and the glamour of
Their loveliness, their bounty, as it were,
Of life, and joy, and love,
Her being seems to shed,
The magic aura of the heart of her.

THE BURDEN OF DESIRE

I

In some glad way I know thereof:
A garden glows down in my heart,
Wherein I meet and often part
With many an ancient tale of love—
A Romeo garden, banked with bloom,
And trellised with the eglantine;
In which a rose climbs to a room,
A balcony one mass of vine,
Dim, haunted of perfume—
A balcony, whereon she gleams,
The soft Desire of all Dreams,
And smiles and bends like Juliet,
Year after year.
While to her side, all dewy wet,

A rose stuck in his ear,
Love climbs to draw her near.

II

And in another way I know:
Down in my soul a graveyard lies,
Wherein I meet, in ghostly wise,
With many an ancient tale of woe—
A graveyard of the Capulets,
Deep-vaulted with ancestral gloom,
Through whose dark yews the moonlight jets
On many a wildly carven tomb,
That mossy mildew frets—
A graveyard where the Soul's Desire
Sleeps, pale-entombed; and, kneeling by her,
Love, like that hapless Montague,
Year after year,
Weary and worn and wild of hue,
Within her sepulchre,
Falls bleeding on her bier.

THE ROSE'S SECRET

When down the west the new moon slipped,
A curved canoe that dipped and tipped,
When from the rose the dewdrop dripped,
  As if it shed its heart's blood slow;
As softly silent as a star
  I climbed a lattice that I know,
A window lattice, held ajar
  By one slim hand as white as snow:
The hand of her who set me here,
A rose, to bloom from year to year.

I, who have heard the bird of June
Sing all night long beneath the moon;
I, who have heard the zephyr croon
  Soft music 'mid spring's avenues,

Heard then a sweeter sound than these,
  Among the shadows and the dews—
A heart that beat like any bee's,
  Sweet with a name—and I know whose:
Her heart that, leaning, pressed on me,
A rose, she never looked to see.

O star and moon! O wind and bird!
Ye hearkened, too, but never heard
The secret sweet, the whispered word
  I heard, when by her lips his name
Was murmured.—Then she saw me there!—
  But that I heard was I to blame?
Whom in the darkness of her hair
  She thrust since I had heard the same:
Condemned within its deeps to lie,
A rose, imprisoned till I die.

WOMAN'S LOVE

Sweet lies! the sweetest ever heard,
To her he said:
Her heart remembers every word
Now he is dead.
I ask:—"If thus his lies can make
Your young heart grieve for his false sake,
Had he been true what had you done
For true love's sake?"—
"Upon his grave there in the sun,
Avoided now of all—but one,
I 'd lay my heart with all its ache,
And let it break, and let it break."

And falsehood! fairer ne'er was seen
Than he put on:

Her heart recalls each look and mien
Now he is gone.
I ask:—"If thus his treachery
Can hold your heart with lie on lie,
What had you done for manly love,
Love without lie?"—
"There in the grass that grows above
His grave, where all could know thereof,
I 'd lay me down without a sigh,
And gladly die, and gladly die."

AUBADE

AWAKE! the Dawn is on the hills!
Behold, at her cool throat a rose,
Blue-eyed and beautiful she goes,
Leaving her steps in daffodils.—
Awake! arise! and let me see
Thine eyes, whose deeps epitomize
All dawns that were or are to be,
O love, all Heaven in thine eyes!—
Awake! arise! come down to me!

Behold! the Dawn is up: behold!
How all the birds around her float,
Wild rills of music, note on note,
Spilling the air with mellow gold.—
Arise! awake! and, drawing near,

Let me but hear thee and rejoice!
Thou, who bear'st captive, sweet and clear,
All song, O love, within thy voice!
Arise! awake! and let me hear!

See, where she comes, with limbs of day,
The Dawn! with wildrose hands and feet,
Within whose veins the sunbeams beat,
And laughters meet of wind and ray.—
Arise! come down! and, heart to heart,
Love, let me clasp in thee all these—
The sunbeam, of which thou art part,
And all the rapture of the breeze!—
Arise! come down! loved that thou art.

THE HUSHED HOUSE

I, WHO went at nightfall, came again at dawn;
On Love's door again I knocked.—Love was gone.

He who oft had bade me in, now would bid no more;
Silence sat within his house; barred its door.

When the slow door opened wide through it I could see
How the emptiness within stared at me.

Through the dreary chambers, long I sought and sighed,
But no answering footstep came; naught replied.

Then at last I entered, dim, a darkened room:
There a taper glimmered gray in the gloom.

And I saw one lying crowned with helichrys;
Never saw I face as fair as was his.

Like a wintry lily was his brow in hue;
And his cheeks were each a rose, wintry too.

Then my soul remembered all that made us part,
And what I had laughed at once — broke my heart.

THE HEART'S DESIRE

God made her body out of foam and flowers,
And for her hair the dawn and darkness blent;
Then called two planets from their heavenly towers,
And in her face, divinely eloquent,
Gave them a firmament.

God made her heart of rosy ice and fire,
Of snow and flame, that freezes while it burns;
And of a starbeam and a moth's desire
He made her soul, to'ards which my longing turns,
And all my being yearns.

So is my life a prisoner unto passion,
Enslaved of her who gives nor sign nor word;

So in the cage her loveliness doth fashion
Is love endungeoned, like a golden bird
That sings but is not heard.

Could it but once convince her with beseeching!
But once compel her as the sun the South!
Could it but once, fond arms around her reaching,
Upon the red carnation of her mouth
Dew its eternal drouth!

Then might I rise victorious over sadness,
O'er fate and change, and, with but little care,
Torched by the glory of that moment's gladness,
Breast the black mountain of my life's despair,
And die—or do and dare.

ACHIEVEMENT

He held himself splendidly forward
  Both early and late;
The aim of his purpose was starward,
  To master his fate:
So he wrought and he toiled and he waited,
Till he rose o'er the hordes that he hated,
And stood on the heights, as was fated,
  Made one of the great.

Then lo! on the top of the mountain,
  With walls that were wide,
A city! from which, as a fountain,
  Rose voices that cried:—
"He comes! Let us forth now to meet him!
Both mummer and priest let us greet him!

In the city he built let us seat him
On the throne of his pride!''

Then out of the city he builded,
Of shadows it seems,
From gates that his fancy had gilded
With thought's brightest gleams,
Strange mimes and chimeras came trooping,
With moping and mowing and stooping—
And he saw, with a heart that was drooping,
That these were his dreams.

He entered; and, lo! as he entered
They murmured his name;
And led him where, burningly centred,
An altar of flame
Made lurid a temple,—erected
Of self,—where a form he detected—
The love that his life had rejected—
And this was his fame.

AT MOONRISE

Pale faces looked up at me, up from the earth,
like flowers;
Pale hands reached down to me, out of the
air, like stars,
As over the hills, robed on with the twilight,
the Hours,
The Day's last Hours, departed, and Dusk
put up her bars.

Pale fingers beckoned me on; pale fingers, like
starlit mist;
Dim voices called to me, dim as the wind's
dim rune,
As up from the night, like a nymph from the
amethyst

Of her waters, as silver as foam, rose the
round, white breast of the moon.

And I followed the pearly waving and beckon
of hands,
The luring glitter and dancing glimmer of feet,
And the sibilant whisper of silence, that sum-
moned to lands
Remoter than legend or faëry, where Myth
and Tradition meet.

And I came to a place where the shadow of
ancient Night
Brooded o'er ruins, far wilder than castles of
dreams;
Fantastic, a mansion of phantoms, where, wan-
dering white,
I met with a shadowy presence whose voice I
had followed, it seems.

And the ivy waved in the wind, and the moonlight laid,
Like a ghostly benediction, a finger wan
On the face of the one from whose eyes the darkness rayed—
The face of the one I had known in the years long gone.

And she looked in my face, and kissed me on brow and on cheek,
Murmured my name, and wistfully smiled in my eyes,
And the tears welled up in my heart, that was wild and weak,
And my bosom seemed bursting with yearning, and my soul with sighs.

And there 'mid the ruins we sat. . . . Oh, strange were the words that she said!—

Distant and dim and strange; and hollow the looks that she gave:
And I knew her then for a joy, a joy that was dead,
A hope, a beautiful hope, that my youth had laid in its grave.

UNFORGOTTEN

I

How many things, that we would remember,
  Sweet or sad, or great or small,
Do our minds forget! and how one thing only,
  One little thing endures o'er all!
For many things have I forgotten,
  But this one thing can never forget—
  The scent of a primrose, woodland-wet,
Long years ago I found in a far land;
  A fragile flower that April set,
Rainy pink, in her forehead's garland.

II

How many things by the heart are forgotten!
  Sad or sweet, or little or great!

And how one thing that could mean nothing
Stays knocking still at the heart's red gate!
For many things has my heart forgotten,
But this one thing can never forget—
The face of a girl, a moment met,
Who smiled in my eyes; whom I passed in pity;
A flower-like face, with weeping wet,
Flung to the streets of a mighty city.

UNSUCCESS

A modern Poet addresses his Muse, to whom he has devoted the best Years of his Life

I

Not here, O belovéd! not here let us part, in the city, but there!
Out there where the storm can enfold us, on the hills, where its breast is made bare:
Its breast, that is rainy and cool as the fern that drips by the fall
In the luminous night of the woodland where winds to the waters call.
Not here, O belovéd! not here! but there! out there in the storm!
The rush and the reel of the heavens, the tempest, whose rapturous arm

Shall seize us and sweep us together,—resistless
as passions seize men,—
Through the rocking world of the woodland,
with its multitude music, and then,
With the rain on our lips, belovéd! in the heart
of the night's wild hell,
One last, long kiss forever, and forever and ever
farewell.

II

I am sick of the madness of men; of the boot-
less struggle and strife:
Of the pain and the patience of waiting; the
scoff and the scorning of life:
I am sick of the shapes and the shadows; the
sins and the sorrows that crowd
The gateways of heart and of brain; of the
laughter, the shout that is loud
In the mouth of Success—Success, that was
never for me, ah me!—

And all the wrong and neglect that are heaped, belovéd, on thee!
I am sick of the whining of failure; the boast and the brag of Success;
The vainness of effort and longing; the dreams and the days that oppress:
I am sick of them all; but am sickest, am sickest in body and soul,
Of the love that I bear thee, belovéd! and only thy death can make whole.

III

Imperfect, imperfect God made us,—or the power that men call God.—
And I think that a Power so perfect, that made us with merely a nod,
Could have fashioned us beings less faulty; more able to wear and to bear;
Less open to mar and to fracture; less filled with the stuff of despair:

Less damned with the unavailing; less empty of
all good things—
The hopes and the dreams that mature not while
the clay still to them clings:
I am sick of it all, belovéd! of the world and
the ways of God;
The thorns that have pierced thy bosom; the
shards of the paths we have trod:
I am sick of going and coming; and of love I
am sickest of all:
The striving, the praying, the dreaming; and
the things that never befall.—
So there in the night, belovéd!—O fair, and O
fugitive!—
Out there in the storm and the darkness, thou
must die so I may live!

THE FIRST QUARTER

I

JANUARY

Shaggy with skins of frost-furred gray and drab,
  Harsh, hoary hair framing a bitter face,
  He bends above the dead Year's fireplace
Nursing the last few embers of its slab
To sullen glow: from pinched lips, cold and crab,
  The starved flame shrinks; his breath, like a menáce,
  Shrieks in the flue, fluttering its sooty lace,
Piercing the silence like an icy stab.
From rheum-gnarled knees he rises, slow with cold,
  And to the frost-bound window, muttering, goes,
  With iron knuckles knocking on the pane;
And, lo! outside, his minions manifold
  Answer the summons: wolf-like shapes of woes,
  Hunger and suffering, trooping to his train.

II

FEBRUARY

Gray-muffled to his eyes in rags of cloud,
  His whip of winds forever in his hand,
  Driving the herded storms along the land,—
That shake the wild sleet from wild hair and crowd
Heaven with tumultuous bulks,—he comes, low-browed
  And heavy-eyed; the hail, like stinging sand,
  Whirls white behind, swept backward by his band
Of wild-hoofed gales that o'er the world ring loud.
All day the tatters of his dark cloak stream
  Congealing moisture, till in solid ice
  The forests stand; and, clang on thunderous clang,
All night is heard,—as in the moon's cold gleam
  Tightens his grip of frost, his iron vise,—
  The boom of bursting boughs that icicles fang.

III

MARCH

This is the tomboy month of all the year,
  March, who comes shouting o'er the winter hills,
  Waking the world with laughter, as she wills,
Or wild halloos, a windflower in her ear.
She stops a moment by the half-thawed mere
  And whistles to the wind, and straightway shrills
  The hyla's song, and hoods of daffodils
Crowd golden 'round her, leaning their heads to hear.
Then through the woods, that drip with all their eaves,
  Her mad hair blown about her, loud she goes
  Singing and calling to the naked trees,
And straight the oilets of the little leaves
  Open their eyes in wonder, rows on rows,
  And the first bluebird bugles to the breeze.

LATE NOVEMBER

I

MORNING

Deep in her broom-sedge, burs and iron-weeds,
  Her frost-slain asters and dead mallow-moons,
  Where gray the wilding clematis balloons
The brake with puff-balls: where the slow stream leads
Her sombre steps: decked with the scarlet beads
  Of hip and haw: through dolorous maroons
  And desolate golds, she goes: the wailing tunes
Of all the winds about her like wild reeds.
The red wrought-iron hues that flush the green
  Of blackberry briers, and the bronze that stains
  The oak's sere leaves, are in her cheeks: the gray
Of forest pools, clocked thin with ice, is keen
  In her cold eyes: and in her hair the rain's
  Chill silver glimmers like a winter ray.

II

NOON

Lost in the sleepy grays and drowsy browns
Of woodlands, smoky with the autumn haze,
Where dull the last leafed maples, smouldering, blaze
Like ghosts of wigwam fires, the Month uncrowns
Her frosty hair, and where the forest drowns
The road in shadows, in the rutted ways,
Filled full of freezing rain, her robe she lays
Of tattered gold, and seats herself and frowns.
And at her frown each wood and bushy hill
Darkens with prescience of approaching storm,
Her soul's familiar fiend, who, with wild broom
Of wind and rain, works her resistless will,
Sweeping the world, and driving with mad arm
The clouds, like leaves, through the tumultuous gloom.

III

EVENING

The shivering wind sits in the oaks, whose limbs,
Twisted and tortured, nevermore are still;
Grief and decay sit with it, they, whose chill
Autumnal touch makes hectic red the rims
Of all the oak leaves; desolating dims
The ageratum's blue that banks the rill,
And splits the milkweed's pod upon the hill,
And shakes it free of the last seed that swims.
Down goes the day despondent to its close:
And now the sunset's hands of copper build
A tower of brass, behind whose burning bars
The day, in fierce, barbarian repose,
Like some imprisoned Inca sits, hate-filled,
Crowned with the gold corymbus of the stars.

IV

NIGHT

There is a booming in the forest boughs:
  Tremendous feet seem trampling through the trees:
  The storm is at his wildman revelries,
And earth and heaven echo his carouse.
Night reels with tumult. And from out her house
  Of cloud the moon looks, like a face one sees
  In nightmare, hurrying with pale eyes that freeze,
Stooping above with white, malignant brows.
The isolated oak upon the hill,
  That seemed, at sunset, in terrific lands
  A Titan head black in a sea of blood,
Now seems a monster harp, whose wild strings thrill
  To the vast fingering of innumerable hands,
  The Spirits of Tempest and of Solitude.

ZERO

The gate, on ice-hoarse hinges, stiff with frost,
Croaks open; and harsh wagon-wheels are heard
Creaking through cold; the horses' breath is furred
Around their nostrils; and with snow deep-mossed
The hut is barely seen, from which, uptossed,
The wood-smoke pillars the icy air unstirred;
And every sound, each axe-stroke and each word,
Comes as through crystal, then again is lost.
The sun strikes bitter on the frozen pane,
And all around there is a tingling,—tense
As is a wire stretched upon a disc
Vibrating without sound:—It is the strain
That Winter plays, to which each tree and fence,
It seems, is strung, as 't were of ringing bisque.

THE JONGLEUR

Last night I lay awake and heard the wind,
That madman jongleur of the world of air,
Making wild music: now he seemed to fare
With harp and lute, so intimately twinned
They were as one; now on a drum he dinned,
Now on a tabor; now, with blow and blare
Of sackbut and recorder, everywhere
Shattered the night; then on a sudden thinned
To bagpipe wailings as of maniac grief
That whined itself to sleep. And then, me-
seemed,
Out in the darkness, mediæval-dim,
I saw him dancing, like an autumn leaf,
In tattered tunic, while around him streamed
His lute's wild ribbons 'thwart the moon's
low rim.

ON THE HILLTOP

THERE is no inspiration in the view.
From where this acorn drops its thimbles brown
The landscape stretches like a shaggy frown;
The wrinkled hills hang haggard and harsh of hue:
Above them hollows the heaven's stony blue,
Like a dull thought that haunts some sleep-dazed clown
Plodding his homeward way; and, whispering down,
The dead leaves dance, a sere and shelterless crew.
Let the sick day stagger unto its close,
Morose and mumbling, like a hoary crone
Beneath her fagots—huddled fogs that soon
Shall flare the windy west with ashen glows,
Like some deep, dying hearth; and let the lone
Night come at last—night, and its withered moon.

AUTUMN STORM

The wind is rising and the leaves are swept
Wildly before it, hundreds on hundreds fall
Huddling beneath the trees. With brag and brawl
Of storm the day is grown a tavern, kept
Of madness, where, with mantles torn and ripped
Of flying leaves that beat above it all,
The wild winds fight; and, like some half-spent ball,
The acorn stings the rout; and, silver-stripped,
The milkweed-pod winks an exhausted lamp:
Now, in his coat of tatters dark that streams,
The ragged rain sweeps stormily this way,
With all his clamorous followers—clouds that camp
Around the hearthstone of the west where gleams
The last chill flame of the expiring day.

OLD SIR JOHN

Bald, with old eyes a blood-shot blue, he comes
Into the Boar's-Head Inn: the hot sweat streaks
His fulvous face, and all his raiment reeks
Of all the stews and all the Eastcheap slums.
Upon the battered board again he drums
And croaks for sack: then sits, his harsh-haired cheeks
Sunk in his hands rough with the grime of weeks,
While 'round the tap one great bluebottle hums.
All, all are gone, the old companions—they
Who made his rogue's world merry: of them all
Not one is left. Old, toothless now, and gray
Alone he waits: the swagger of that day
Gone from his bulk—departed even as Doll,
And he, his Hal, who broke his heart, they say.

UNTO WHAT END

Unto what end, I ask, unto what end
Is all this effort, this unrest and toil?
Work that avails not? strife and mad turmoil?
Ambitions vain that rack our hearts and rend?
Did labor but avail! did it defend
The soul from its despair, who would recoil
From sweet endeavor then? work that were oil
To still the storms that in the heart contend!
But still to see all effort valueless!
To toil in vain year after weary year
At Song! beholding every other Art
Considered more than Song's high holiness,—
The difficult, the beautiful and dear!—
Doth break my heart, ah God! doth break my heart!

ELFIN

I

When wildflower blue and wildflower white
  The wildflowers lay their heads together,
And the moon-moth glimmers along the night,
And the wandering firefly flares its light,
And the full moon rises broad and bright,
  Then, then it is elfin weather.

II

And fern and flower on top of the hill
  Are a fairy wood where the fairies camp ;
And there, to the pipe of the cricket shrill,
And the owl's bassoon or the whippoorwill,
They whirl their wildest and trip their fill
  By the light of the glowworm's lamp.

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III

And the green tree-toad and the katydid
  Are the henchmen set to guard their dance;
At whose cry they creep 'neath the dewy lid
Of a violet's eye, or close lie hid
In a bluebell's ear, if a mortal 'mid
  The moonlit woods should chance.

IV

And the forest-fly with its gossamer wings,
  And filmy body of rainbow dye,
Is the ouphen steed each elfin brings,
Whereon by the light of the stars he swings,
When the dance is done and the barn-cock sings,
  And the dim dawn streaks the sky.

AUTHORITIES

The unpretentious flowers of the woods,
That rise in bright and banded brotherhoods,
Waving us welcome, and with kisses sweet
Laying their lives down underneath our feet,
Lesson my soul more than the tomes of man,
Packed with the lore of ages, ever can,
In love and truth, hope and humility,
And such unselfishness as to the bee,
Lifting permissive petals dripping nard,
Yields every sweet up, asking no reward.
The many flowers of wood and field and stream,
Filling our hearts with wonder and with dream,
That know no ceremony, yet that are
Attended of such reverence as that star—
That punctual point of flame, which, to our eyes,

Leads on the vast procession of the skies,
Sidereal silver, glittering in the west—
Compels, assertive of heaven's loveliest.
Where may one find suggestion simpler set
Than in the radius of a violet?
Or more authentic loveliness than glows
In the small compass of a single rose?
Or more of spiritual thought than perfumes from
The absolute purity of a lily-bloom?

EPILOGUE

We have worshipped two gods from our earliest
youth,
Soul of my soul and heart of me!
Young forever and true as truth—
The gods of Beauty and Poesy.
Sweet to us are their tyrannies,
Sweet their chains that have held us long,
For God's own self is a part of these,
Part of our gods of Beauty and Song.

What to us if the world revile!
What to us if its heart rejects!
It may scorn our gods, or curse with a smile,
The gods we worship, that it neglects:

Nothing to us is its blessing or curse;
Less than nothing its hate and wrong:
For Love smiles down through the universe,
Smiles on our gods of Beauty and Song.

We go our ways: and the dreams we dream
People our path and cheer us on;
And ever before is the golden gleam,
The star we follow, the streak of dawn:
Nothing to us is the word men say;
For a wiser word still keeps us strong,
God's word, that makes fine fire of clay,
That shaped our gods of Beauty and Song.

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